RAGE & REVENGE

THOMAS GOODRICH

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Rage & Revenge

Torture & Atrocities in War & Peace
Thomas Goodrich

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I would like to thank both the Kent State University Press and Stackpole Books for granting me permission to quote extensively in this book from Bloody Dawn—The Story of the Lawrence Massacre*, and* Scalp Dance—Indian Warfare on the High Plains, 1865-1879, *respectively. Additionally, I want to thank each publisher for their actual assistance in the production of this book.*

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PREFACE

T

HERE now seems no doubt. One dozen books in two dozen years can't be wrong–I am fascinated by blood, fascinated by hate, fascinated by war. Even

the books that I have penned which do not deal directly with war deal indirectly with war and its aftermath. Why? Why so preoccupied by war and violence?

On this account I am not entirely certain. I can state the obvious, I can state it emphatically, and, as anyone who knows me or has read any of my books can aver: Tom Goodrich *hates* war. He hates the fact that like bat-winged vampires, in times of conflict the blood-thirsty sadists among us flap forth in the night to sate on death and gore until the dawn of peace drives them back to their underworld holes once more; he also hates the evil that war unleashes upon our women, children and animals. He hates the fact that during times of trouble, the vicious and the depraved ride tall in the saddle while the good and the moderate get trampled underfoot. He hates the evil crimes that in times of peace would earn the perpetrator a trip to Death Row but in times of war earn the "hero" medals, book deals and praise for their patriotism. He hates the fact that while war lasts, patient reason always runs a distant second to murderous impulse. In other words, war is

civilization's proverbial one step backwards after its laborious two steps forward.

I am a vegetarian. Not only do I eat no meat, but I avoid the sight of blood, man or beast, whenever possible. So, how do I … rather, so what am I doing spending my adult life

writing about the spilling of rivers of that same red fluid that I really prefer not to look at? Maybe I cannot help myself. Perhaps it's genetic.

One of my earliest visions as a child was that of a long blue column of US Cavalry winding down a dusty road with the Stars and Stripes flapping in the breeze during the American Civil War. Another strong image I carried from childhood was that of George Armstrong Custer—played by the dashing Errol Flynn—standing on that lonely hill top, saber in hand, defiantly facing the final Indian charge that would trample and kill him. Perhaps I am nothing so much as I am a product of my culture; a misbegotten creature of an overly militarized and war-lusting America. With a nonstop barrage of war movies entering our DNA as kids in the Fifties, what boy would not be fascinated by war?

Maybe nature, maybe nurture, whichever it is, I know that my true reason for writing about war is not to perpetuate it but to do my part to end it. Fascinated by war? Yes. Fascinated by evil? Yes. Wedded to war? No. Wedded to evil? No. Quite the opposite. My books are so graphic and so personal that no one could confuse me with someone who glorifies such ghoulish business. Since my first book, my goal has always been to make war come alive; to make war real; to describe war in such horrific detail that every reader who finished a Thomas Goodrich book could honestly say, "Well, now I know. I have now seen up close the face of war and truly it is a terrible thing to see. There is nothing honest, or glorious, or manly about it. It is all vile, vicious and vulgar. I want no part of it."

The following are some samples of war in all its graphic gore. Most authors, I've noticed, sign a book and hand it back to a buyer with the perfunctory, "I hope you enjoy it." Thus, at this juncture I will now part from protocol and simply ask that you take this book, read it, hopefully gain from it … but above all, hopefully you will never *enjoy* it.

x xi

PART ONE

L

ONG before the guns at Ft. Sumter ignited the American Civil War in 1861, another war was waged on the distant border of Kansas and Missouri.

There, in 1854, the fight between pro-slavery Missourians and antislavery Kansans began. The anger and hatred of the two parties soon escalated from a war of words to a war of violence in which Americans finally got down to the bloody business of killing one another over this question: "Will slavery continue in the United States or will it

not?" By the time the entire nation, North and South, finally joined in the fratricidal blood-letting in 1861, Kansans and Missourians had already been engaged in the hate and slaughter for seven years.

Soon, and little noticed by the nation at large due to the bloody contest at its own doorstep, the war in the west quickly descended into one of savagery; of arson, theft, torture, mutilation, murder, and massacre as "Jayhawkers" from Kansas raided Missouri and "bushwhackers" from Missouri raided Kansas.

By the summer of 1863, the hatred along the KansasMissouri border had reached a flashpoint. Convinced that the federal occupation authorities had declared war on their women when five were killed in a prison collapse in Kansas

City, the Missouri guerrillas lead by William Quantrill decided the time had come for a bloody revenge.

Since the onset of the troubles in 1854, Lawrence, Kansas, had been the epicenter of anti-slavery agitation and violence on the western frontier. It was here, along the banks of the Kansas, or Kaw, River, that many Jayhawking forays into Missouri had originated and it was here where much of the stolen loot had returned with the Unionist guerrillas known as Red Legs. Unlike the devastated Missouri border, the area around Lawrence, beyond the reach of rebel raiders, had hardly been touched by war. Thus, although it seemed suicidal, the 450 Missouri irregulars who rode west with Quantrill were determined to strike a blow at what they viewed as the heart of the problem.

At dawn of August 21, 1863, after a grueling all-night ride of fifty miles in which he had "dodged and baffled" his Yankee pursuers, Quantrill finally halted his force on a ridge just east of Lawrence.

The following is from my book, *Bloody Dawn—The Story of the Lawrence Massacre.*

MASSACRE

T

HE day came clear and calm on Friday, August 21, 1863. Not a cloud in the pale morning sky, nor was there a trace of wind. Looking down from Mount

Oread a few threads of white smoke were visible, curling straight up as early risers began preparing their breakfasts. Reaching to the heights came the faraway low of milk cows and the tiny, strained efforts of dueling roosters. Black, impassive, the Kaw turned the bend and silently slid east.

Although the land was yet dark, from the summit several figures could nevertheless be seen stirring in the twilight. There were the local hounds trotting their morning circuit, scouting leftovers from the evening past. But there was also Sallie Young, the Eldridge House seamstress, taking her customary ride from town. Two beaux were with her, and at the moment the showoffs were racing their horses south down the Fort Scott Road. Directly below, on Massachusetts Street, the boy recruits were just beginning to rise and dress. Charles Pease was close by, coming down the street from his slaughterhouse with a carcass of beef in the back of the wagon. His dog tripped along beside. Arthur Spicer had begun sweeping out the first of the day's dust from his beer hall, and in the streets George Sargent was making the rounds, tinkling his bell, delivering milk door to door.

At the Eldridge all was silent save for the kitchen sounds of colored help beginning breakfast. Across the misty river, parked in the cottonwood grove, two teams loaded with salt for R & B's waited on the ferry to start service for the day. And winding his way up the face of Mount Oread was Charles Robinson. Leaving his wife at home by the riverside, the troubled former governor was taking advantage of the splendid new day. Above the slumbering town he approached the stone barn where his first house had stood. Here he would hitch a carriage and take a jaunt over the countryside while the air was yet cool and fresh and where one could remain undisturbed and lost in thought. By his watch, it was five o'clock.

Songbirds began their morning ritual, and gradually, as it grew lighter, several more people emerged to stretch upon porches or visit a back building. In all, it was a tranquil scene—the dawn of a typical summer day in Lawrence.

The more he watched, however, the more George Bell realized there would be nothing typical about this day. He was the first to see them. From his home on Mount Oread the county clerk's attention had for some time been focused toward the Wakarusa where he spied a huge column of riders slowly materializing from the murky valley.

Bell had naturally assumed they were Union troops. But then there had been the alarms and the "great scare" of three weeks past, and the longer he watched and the more he thought, the greater his suspicion grew. As the horsemen neared, there were mysterious starts and stops and then, when they halted on the rise and two men rode into town and back and two more split off to Sam Snyder's farm, Bell became certain that this was not the federal cavalry. They didn't even have a flag.

Grabbing his musket and cartridge box, the clerk ran for the door. His wife and children tried to stop him; if it were true, they begged, there was little one person could do, for the town was asleep. The man brushed their pleading aside. "If they take Lawrence," he announced, "they must do it over my dead body." Rushing down the slope, George Bell headed for the armory.

Sallie Young was next. Someone with her said that the column to the east was a Kansas outfit. But no one had mentioned anything about their arrival yesterday. They watched for a bit, but their curiosity was up and soon the friends rode back toward town. As it grew lighter, a few people in the south also saw them and turned to watch.

***

Finally, Quantrill paused for the last time. The young guide was passed to the rear. A number of men quickly jumped down, and loose saddle girths were hurriedly cinched. Blue jackets were stripped off, red sleeves rolled up. Revolvers were drawn, percussion caps checked. Some of the best stuck leather reins in their mouth and bit down hard, leaving both hands free. One final time Quantrill turned and reminded the Missourians why they had come. They knew. Then, at five past five, Quantrill's horse broke away at a gallop. Behind, a wild, explosive shout went up and the entire command lunged forward at a run. A few shots rang out but most held their fire.

As the roar came nearer—an unearthly scream some thought, unlike anything ever heard in Lawrence—people in the south of town jumped startled from their beds and ran to windows, then to one another.

Those men ... they have no flag!
There's a regiment of them!
The rebels have come!
The bushwhackers are here!
Quantrill's band as sure as you live!
Quantrill is here!
QUANTRILL!

At his barn Governor Robinson turned sharply to the east. He saw a number of tiny flashes followed by as many puffs of gray smoke and these in turn followed by the faint rattle of small arms fire. Unfamiliar as he was with actual warfare, Robinson nevertheless understood. As he inched his way back into the barn the governor saw below a long, dark mass moving rapidly through the south of town striking for the center.

In East Lawrence, blacks were already pouring from their huts and dashing for the river. "The secesh have come," they screamed. *"The secesh have come."*

Across the ravine in West Lawrence, those who were awakened by the gunfire thought first of Independence Day and firecrackers … then the marshal's dog killers … then the recruits acting up. But the Fourth of July was long past and most of the stray dogs had been killed. As for the recruits, they had no weapons. US Senator, James Lane, rose on an elbow and cocked an ear to the south window.

In the quiet surrounding his farm one mile west of Lawrence, Levi Gates also heard the strange sound. Without a second thought he reached for his long-range hunting rifle, and like George Bell and a good many others, Gates rushed straight for town.

At the south edge of Lawrence, Sallie and her friends stopped by the yard of the Reverend Snyder. The group could just make out the distant rumble in town, and here was Mrs. Snyder leaning over her husband Sam, sobbing uncontrollably. A milk pail was turned over, the cow was gone, and the front of the reverend's shirt was covered with blood. But the woman wouldn't say what had happened. The noise drew the riders further into town.

***

Charging across open lots, the raiders soon began to separate. With waves and nods, scores of men, mostly farmers and young recruits, split off to picket Mount Oread and the roads leading from town. A little further on, the main body itself broke into three columns, with Quantrill leading the larger to Massachusetts Street while two smaller groups turned down New Hampshire and Vermont. The shooting became more regular.

Ahead, as the roar approached, the boys in the recruit camp came falling from tents, struggling to get into their clothes. Across the street the black camp was already deserted.

When the main column spotted the tents and blue uniforms a moment later, it never slowed, but with shouts —*Osceola! Kansas City! Remember the girls!*—it rode right on through. As it did, there came a deafening explosion as hundreds of shots were fired up and down the ranks. In a few seconds, when they had passed, all that remained was settling dust, blood-spattered canvas, and a pile of twisted bodies, hands still clutching jackets and trousers. Seeing this, Charles Pease leaped from his meat wagon and flattened himself on the ground. Hard beside him, his dog shivered from paw to haunch.

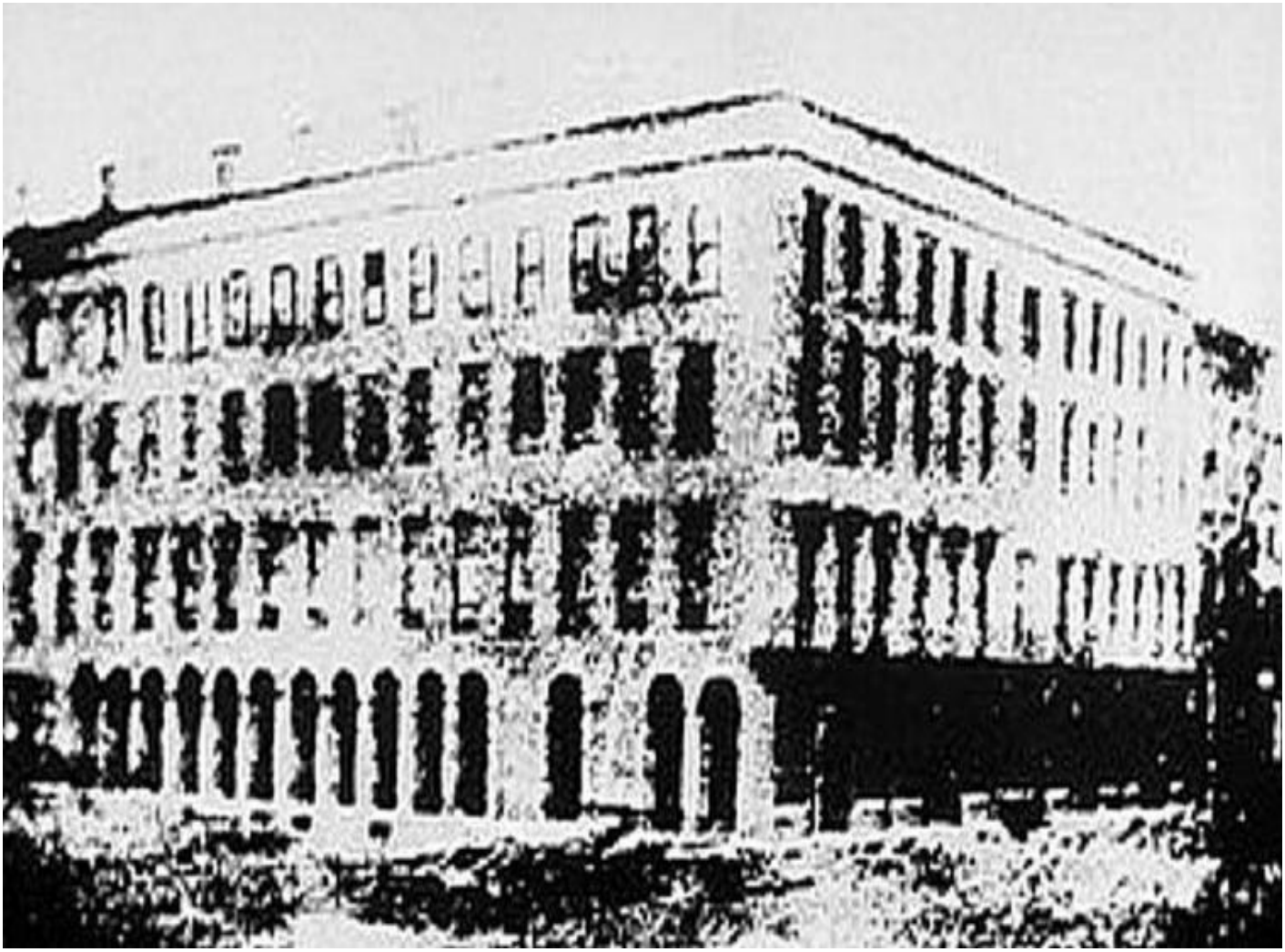
With the cry "On to the hotel," the main column stormed into the business district. Thundering down broad Massachusetts Street five and six abreast, shots were fired randomly at storefronts while on the adjoining streets others fired into the back doors. At last, in a huge cloud of dust, the three columns converged and washed against the Eldridge House. Here they pulled up. A few shots rang out, but soon all became still, and

as the shouts and swearing died away only the horses, rearing and plunging, were heard. With hundreds of guns moving from window to window the guerrillas watched and waited. A cannon was parked across the street at the courthouse, but no one was there to use it.

Inside the hotel, there was no panic. Most guests were still in bed, for it had been too sudden. After looking out, some men thought fast enough to slip their money to women. An employee quickly tossed his life savings of $100 in gold through a trap door onto the roof, and someone shouted that "half-wit" Jo, the hotel owner's brother, had been shot while scaling the courtyard fence. But most were simply too groggy to be frightened. Eastern guests were outraged at being roused at such an hour.

One look and Alexander Banks knew it was hopeless. From his third-floor window the state provost marshal gazed down on a sea of upturned faces, fantastic faces— unshaven, deeply tanned, distorted faces, streaked with sweat, dust, and powder, burning with red-rimmed eyes, and framed in long, greasy hair. There were probably no more than a dozen weapons, including his own, in the entire hotel, so Banks made a quick decision. Yanking a sheet from his bed, he hung it out the window.

Below, there was a thunderous cheer at the symbol,



Eldridge House

and when all had quieted the provost marshal asked for the leader to come forward. As soon as Quantrill appeared, Banks wisely began bargaining for the safety of the occupants; the hotel would be surrendered without a fight, but first, he insisted, the well-being of the guests must be guaranteed. Quantrill was about to answer when a loud clanging echoed throughout the hotel. Startled, the mass of riders whirled and sprang back, ready to open fire. Quickly Banks yelled out, begging the rebels not to shoot; it was a mistake—only the excited night clerk raising the guests with the dinner gong. For a moment, everything was "breathlessly still." Shortly, Quantrill again spoke with Banks and soon agreed to the terms, much relieved that the hotel had not become a fortress as feared.

With wild shouts and cheers for Quantrill, many guerrillas then left for the stables and other parts of town while another group dismounted and, with brass spurs jingling, tramped into the plush hotel. Upstairs, fine ladies and gentlemen, scantily clad, had their rooms burst into by dirty, cursing men who with a splash of tobacco juice and wave of a

pistol ordered them out and down to the lobby. Trunks and carpet sacks were ripped open, and jewelry, currency, and ladies' apparel were crammed into pockets. The looting went from room to room as the stupefied boarders—a travelling bishop and priests included—fled down the staircase. Banks and his assurance of safety did little to calm nerves as the celebration above grew in fury. Downstairs, the trembling night clerk was forced to open the safe while other rebels passed quietly about the crowded lobby, tapping men on the shoulder and asking, "your money, if you please!" much as a railroad conductor might pause for tickets, thought one man. With some remaining humor another captive asked if he might keep just fifty cents for a drink or two. The bushwhacker stared at him for a deadly moment or two, gave a slow smile, and then handed back eighty.

Down Massachusetts Street, store doors were kicked in and food and liquor were located. Miniature US flags were also discovered, then with a laugh fastened to the rumps of horses. The offices of the *Republican* and *State Journal* were quickly put to the torch. Near the river, the rope on the liberty pole was cut and, amid loud cheers, the huge red, white, and blue banner came fluttering down.

Among the twelve soldiers across the Kaw there was no longer any doubt. First came the mad flight of blacks furiously paddling boats and logs or simply swimming the swollen river. Then the flag fell. Then the cheers. Taking aim, the troops opened fire. On the opposite shore, several raiders trying to cut the ferry cable went spinning up the bank again. When a horseman was spotted, more slugs whizzed up Massachusetts Street and between homes near the river.

***

Sallie Young and her two companions came into Lawrence quite some distance before they realized their mistake. Warning her friends to stay calm, the three quietly turned and rode slowly from town. When the outskirts were reached and a rebel picket sighted them, the two boys set spurs and were off south. Sallie rode back into town.

***

Soon, Quantrill entered the hotel. Stepping into the packed lobby he met a number of old faces, whereupon he shook hands and spoke briefly. He assured them of their safety. The guerrilla chief then climbed a flight of stairs and strode to the landing where he looked over the crowd and watched while his men went about their work. Everyone below seemed stunned. Terrified, most expected the leader to be the essence of his men; wild, vulgar, and snarling. On this score, however, they were gratefully surprised. Although he gripped a big pistol, with another in his belt, there was a pleasant, calm, even benign look spread over his boyish face and clear blue eyes. His gray hunting shirt was open at

the chest and he wore a low-crowned Spanish hat with gold neck cord and little tassels dangling around the brim.

"A fine-looking man," mused a captive.

Some in the crowd attempted to humor and flatter, grinning sheepishly, reminding him of old times in the territory and congratulating him on his brilliant success in capturing Lawrence. Unmoved, Quantrill received the tribute with "marked complacency," simply adding that yes, it was by far his greatest exploit. Another ventured to ask why he hadn't come during the full moon as he had threatened.

"You were expecting me then," he smiled.

Then, after once more vouching for their safety, Quantrill asked if Governor Carney was in town. He was not, someone answered.

Again, he queried if anyone knew where Senator Lane lived? Arthur Spicer "volunteered." After ordering the captives across the street and assigning several men to guard them, Quantrill detailed a squad to follow Spicer to Lane's house: if he misled them, the saloonkeeper was to be shot on the spot; otherwise Spicer was to be returned alive as there was an old score yet to settle.

As they were being herded across the street, a number of bushwhackers cast crude remarks and curses at the captives. Already some raiders were glutted with liquor. One angry guerrilla, clamoring to murder the hostages, rode up, called a man a Red Leg, then aimed and fired. Although the shot missed, a guard threatened to kill the drunk should he fire again. This was seconded by Quantrill, who came out after hearing the disturbance. Quickly, he ordered the prisoners to the City Hotel near the river where

William Quantrill

they would remain safe. At this, the terror-stricken men and women sprang headlong for the refuge, Quantrill escorting a short distance behind.

Reaching the hotel, the rebel warmly greeted Nathan Stone and his beautiful daughter, Lydia, and shouted to the raiders nearby that the Stones were his friends and that neither they, the hostages, nor the building was to be touched. He then turned to leave. Before he left, however, Quantrill once more reminded the captives that Stone's hotel was their haven: "Stay in it. … Don't attempt to go into the streets."

***

Although no Red Legs were there this morning, the rebels didn't know it, and thus the three-story Johnson House was quickly surrounded by a large band. Unlike the Eldridge,

however, the score of people inside refused to come out. Consequently, the bushwhackers began sniping at the windows, mixing the gunfire with calls to surrender. "All we want is for the men to give themselves up," they yelled, "and we will spare them and burn the house."

Two doors down, in a home of screaming children, Getta Dix was doing everything in her power to get her husband to move. Earlier, while Ralph was still in bed, Getta had looked up the street and watched in disbelief while "half-wit" Jo was shot off the Eldridge fence; now with more shooting at the Johnson House the street was full of men. Again she pleaded—the raiders were too busy at the hotel—there was still a chance. But Ralph, his brother Steve, and several employees seemed frozen, uncertain, feebly reassuring one another that it was only a matter of time before help arrived.

Again the woman begged. But nothing. Putting her children in the arms of the men, she then ran down the flight of stairs to the side of the house and struggled a heavy ladder up to a window. As she was coming back, however, Getta looked over toward the Johnson House, and there to her horror she saw several men leaping from windows only to be shot upon landing. Running back into the home, the woman barred the doors and told her husband what she had seen, warning the rest to stay inside. This and the fear of fire jolted the men. Together, despite his wife's pleas, Dix and the others decided that their only hope now rested behind the stone walls of the Johnson House. Thus after climbing out a window and crawling over the roof of the adjoining barber shop, every man did eventually reach the hotel.

After seeing Ralph safely on the other side, and after taking her children to a coal shed out back, Getta desperately searched for her black nurse. The woman was finally discovered locked in a closet, refusing to come out. Grabbing a meat cleaver from the kitchen, the frantic mother hacked open the door and ordered the frightened nurse toward the shed to mind the children while she herself went to the Johnson House.

No sooner had Getta left than she saw her brother-inlaw tumble down the steps at the rear of the hotel. Running to his side, she settled his head into her lap and sought to comfort him. But Steve was dead, and when Getta tried to move, his brain fell into her hands.

Then, as the blood-smeared woman staggered to the front, she could see that the hotel had surrendered. And there, standing among the rest, Getta saw through a rush of pain and tears her husband.

"Oh my God, Ralph," she screamed. "Why did you do it? I know they will kill you." Another prisoner nearby had just handed a pistol to his captor. As soon as the weapon was given up a gun exploded behind the man, blowing out his stomach. Horrified, Dix

and the other seven captives screamed for mercy.
"I have killed seven Red Legs," laughed the head of the gang, "and I'll kill eight more."
Wildly pleading that it was a mistake, that they weren't Red Legs, the white-eyed, sobbing men knelt and crawled on the ground, reaching up to the guerrillas for life. Although she too was pleading for his life, Dix begged his wife to try even harder. At length, the prisoners were kicked and punched to their feet and driven by three guards across the street toward the Methodist Church. With Getta clinging to Ralph's arm, she begged the men at every step not to harm him. Two of the rebels bent, then broke, making her a promise. But the leader was firm.
"No, I won't let you take your husband away," he said. "I'm going to kill every damn one of them."
Hanging desperately to Ralph, striking at the raider's horse as it tried to nudge her away, the woman walked sideways, never taking her eyes from the leader. Up from the church, in the alley, Getta stumbled over a pile of rocks, breaking her hold, and before she could rise again the guns went off. Somewhere in the swirling blue smoke she saw Ralph go down. As in a dream, she stood while all around her the others fell away. Racing down the alley, another group of riders spotted the pile of bodies; without slowing they trampled and mashed them into the ground.
Getta wandered along Massachusetts Street for sometime—to a store where looting guerrillas chased her away, to a figure that was still breathing. But nothing, it seemed, could hold her attention. She continued to drift aimlessly until at last she found herself again in the alley. Noticing a straw hat laying nearby, Getta picked it up, quietly placed it over her husband's face, then calmly walked back to her burning home.

***

Although a number of raiders roamed Massachusetts Street, exploring one store after the other, most broke into squads and covered the town. Many, like the guerrilla leaders, George Todd and Bill Anderson, rode over the bridges spanning the ravine and paid a visit to affluent West Lawrence. From out of shirt pockets came the lists with the long row of names, and the firing that opened the morning so terrifically now settled into short, methodical bursts from every corner of town. The Missourians had finally gotten among those they hated most, and no power on earth could stop them now.

***

Panic gripped Mayor George Collamore. Springing from window to window, he, his wife Julia, and their Irish servant saw on all sides only nightmarish guerrillas, angry and shouting. There was no way out. Suddenly the desperate man thought of his well and quickly ran for the rear. There, in a wing of the house the tiny mayor dove down the dark hole followed closely by his *Bill Anderson* servant.

At the front door the gang entered, met by Julia and her frightened children. Cursing and yelling, they demanded her husband. Receiving no reply from the terror-stricken wife, the men crashed through the home, up and down, from one room to the next, madly hunting their prey. Failing in this, it was decided simply to smoke the victim out. Setting the house on fire, the raiders fell back into the street to watch and wait for the mayor's appearance.

Refusing to leave, Julia slipped to the well, and as the flames spread throughout the home, she spoke down to her husband.

***

By the time George Bell reached the center of town, Lawrence was surrounded. There had been no resistance. Nowhere could Bell hear the distinct crack of a militia rifle, and as far as he could see he was the only citizen shouldering a weapon. His courage dissolved. Bell looked for a way to escape, returning to home and family his sole desire. At last he ducked into the ravine. There, to his surprise, he met many others, just as confused and frightened as he.

"Where shall we meet?" he whispered. Aghast at such a notion, those nearby warned that it was pointless to think about a stand any longer; fighting would only get them all killed. A friend urged Bell to throw down his musket and perhaps draw less malice should he be taken. The sounds of gunfire and pounding hooves were more than enough to convince Bell of the wisdom in this. Dropping the rifle and cartridge box, the county clerk inched his way up the ravine toward home.

***

When Levi Gates reached West Lawrence from his farm he realized that it was too late. Across the ravine he could plainly see rebels in the center of town and more to the south, and it was obvious there was little he could do. All of Gates' friends and neighbors who had come on the run had turned back home in dismay. He was about to do the same. But Levi Gates took pride in the fact that he was an excellent shot, and the once-in-a-lifetime chance to try his hand on a human target and bag a rebel proved irresistible.

Dismounting, the farmer steadied his hunting rifle on a fence, sighted his mark, then squeezed the trigger. Although it was a long shot, a guerrilla in the distance jumped in his saddle. Tempted further, Gates once more loaded and fired, then raced for the wooded ravine. He failed to notice the rider closing on his right, however, and after he was brought down and the rebel had finished with him, Levi Gates lay sprawled in the dust, his head flat and mashed "to a jelly."

***

The first Jim Lane knew of anything was when a "flying Negro" passed his home and yelled that the bushwhackers were in town. Instantly the mansion became a bedlam, and while the wife and children flashed about in their night clothes trying to locate two guns stored somewhere, the senator peered out the window watching for the approach of the raiders. The guns could not be found. Grabbing a ceremonial sword as his only recourse,

Lane quickly dropped it as the horsemen led by Arthur Spicer drew up at the front gate. Bolting through the house, the Jayhawker flew out the back window and ran for a small gully, bobbing and weaving, pausing just long enough to look for Rebel pickets. In a few moments Lane emerged from the gully and went streaking west through his cornfield, nightshirt flapping in the breeze.

Meeting them at the door, Mary Lane politely informed the guerrillas that the senator was not at home. Foiled at not coming face to face with the most famous Jayhawker in Kansas, the rebels settled for next best and proceeded to dismantle his home. Pianos, furniture, china—much of it ironically, stolen in Missouri—were broken up and strewn about, as were the senator's private papers. The rings worn by Mary and her daughter were snatched from their fingers. Having finally located one of the shotguns, James Jr. was warned to give it up. He refused. When a blast smashed into the wall nearby he at last did as he was told. The home was then set ablaze. But the mother and children hurried and put it out. Again a fire was lit in a different spot and again the family rushed and extinguished it. Finally the flames caught and spread in a third area and the frantic attempts to save the finest home in Lawrence at last ceased.

At that, the gang mounted and rode away. With them not only did they take Lane's "magnificent banner" presented to his Indiana regiment for duty in the Mexican War, but the senator’s shining sword as well.

By now Lane himself was almost a mile away, crossing over the California Road, still running.
***

One block east of Lane's, another group surrounded the stately home of Jerome Griswold. The swoop completely stunned the four families inside. With loud, ugly shouts the men were ordered to come out. Looking down from the second-floor bedrooms at the terrifying array below, Dr. Griswold, Jo Trask, Harlow Baker, Simeon Thorp, along with their wives turned and spoke excitedly about what they should do. Again the men were demanded; again there was no response. A moment or two passed and then, anxiously, someone in the house called out and asked why the men were wanted.

"The damned sons of bitches must come out of there," yelled an impatient guerrilla. He was echoed by his companions. No one in the home moved at this awful demand.

Soon, another raider, wiser than the first, urged the Kansans to come out, that he would guarantee their safety once they did. No one would be harmed, he insisted, adding that they came only to rob Lawrence, and "if the citizens quietly surrender ... it might save the town." This last approach softened the four men in the home. And besides, there was nothing else they could do.

"If it will help to save the town," Trask advised, "let us go."
The men—balding State Senator Thorp, handsome newspaper-man Trask, and dark-bearded, husky Griswold—filed down the staircase and reluctantly walked out the door. While Baker was getting into his clothes, the bushwhackers quickly encircled the others. The captives were asked their names and occupations, then robbed, and when Baker at last came down, the raiders formed the four men into a line. As the wives watched, the husbands were ordered to march toward town, and with Baker in the lead and a guerrilla riding at the side of each, they walked off.
Just as they cleared the yard one of the rebels cursed the men for going too slowly. This caused the prisoners to quickly pick up the pace. Something exploded behind him, ripping through his neck, and before Baker hit the ground another shot shattered his wrist. The rest of the guns went off. Thorp fell down near Baker while Trask managed to run only a short distance before he too went down. Wounded several times, big Jerome Griswold stayed on his feet. He made it all the way back to the yard and was on the verge of escape, but just as he was scrambling over some cordwood a well-aimed ball tore the life from him once and for all.
As the women stood shrieking in horror the Missourians paused to scan their work. One man was dead outright, whereas the other three were still breathing. Screaming hysterically, the wives raced down the stairs and through the door toward the dying men. Before they could reach them, however, the raiders, cussing and shouting, drove them back again. Jo Trask, rolling and kicking in terrible pain, pleaded with a rebel to let his wife come to him. The guerrilla listened for a moment, thought the matter over, then agreed. Cocking his pistol, he aimed down and sent a chunk of lead whizzing through Trask's heart.
"He's dead," shouted the killer to the wife. "You can come now."
It was decided to leave the two yet alive to lay and suffer as they were, and while the gang moved down the street a mounted guard was stationed a little beyond. After the others had left, the women again tried to reach their husbands but were once more frightened back when the rebel rode down on them at a charge. There was nothing they could do. The mayor's house was burning and others were starting to smoke, and there were the men lying all alone.
In great agony from a stomach wound, Senator Thorp writhed in the blood and dust. His friend Baker lay a few paces off, bleeding from the neck and hand. Harlow Baker had come close to drowning once in a swirling black river of his native Maine, so he understood death a little better than most. Although they were painful, the grocer knew that his wounds were not mortal. He remained still nonetheless. Beyond, no sound or movement came from Griswold or Trask.

***

Around the burning home of George Collamore all the guerrillas had gone. They left fully satisfied that Collamore had either escaped earlier or burned to death in the fire. But to them the most certain thing in the world was that the mayor of Lawrence could not be in the house and still alive. Even Julia, who had remained by the well talking down to her husband until the very last, was forced out by the murderous heat.

Standing back, she watched. The fire engulfed the house and spread to the wing, and then the orange flames crackled and licked over the mouth of the well.

***

Old Joseph Savage wasn't in that great of a rush to leave town—at least not until he had hitched his buggy and safely loaded everything of value into the back, including his brand-new silver baritone, which he was eager to show off at the next band concert. But finally, he and his wife and a German friend did pull away from their home just south of Lawrence and drove up Cemetery Road. "Mine pipe, mine pipe," cried the German, who wanted to go back and get it. But Savage wasn't turning around just for a pipe, and the German and his smoke would simply have to wait.

After a short ride the group came to the home of Otis Longley; here they stopped. To their surprise they saw Otis suddenly bolt out his back door and run to the front, "making a frightened noise, unlike any other sound I ever heard," thought Savage. Close behind came two men cursing him to halt. Otis kept going, however, and just as he was about to reach the fence along the road, a shot rang out. Otis went down. As the stunned people watched on, the moaning man struggled to climb the fence. But another explosion sounded behind him and another bullet blew open his jaw, knocking him back to the ground. When the two rebels walked up—one greedily chomping slices of cantaloupe—Otis was on his hands and knees, coughing streams of blood. Again he tried to rise. A loud blast at close range dropped him for good. The men then crossed the fence.

Joseph Savage, "sometimes crawling, and sometimes running and rolling," had already made a break for cover. But trembling and pale, the German sat beside Mrs. Savage stiff with fear. The woman's pleading and the sight of the horrified German was just too much, however, and the wagon was allowed to pass.

The two guerrillas strolled back to the house, the one still eating melon and the other merrily tooting his new silver horn.

***

"Now is your time to make your escape," whispered one of the raiders behind Lemuel Fillmore. Earlier, Fillmore had taken his valuable horse to the ravine for safekeeping.

Instead of staying there, however, he returned to his house for a pistol. That's when they caught and disarmed him, and that's why he was now being marched toward Massachusetts Street.
"Now is your time to run," the captor whispered as they

neared the ravine. At this, Fillmore decided to make his move. He got only a few paces, however, before he was shot in the back and killed.

In West Lawrence an old man stood by a fence, idly spectating. A rebel rode up. Water was demanded. The old man ambled off and soon returned. Taking the cup with his left hand, the bushwhacker shot the man dead with his right.

Like these victims, most common people were at first impervious to the peril around them. Many were still under the impression that as with Olathe, Shawnee, and the others, this raid was for plunder alone, where only "marked" men would

suffer. Otis Longley had*Sallie Young* seen rebels on Mount

Oread earlier, but he went
right on with his chores. When finished, Otis drew buckets of water and sat patiently waiting, just in case his home was set on fire. The attorney, Sam Riggs, despite the warnings of his wife, Kate, continued to help neighbors along his street by removing furniture and dousing flames. Many others reacted similarly.

Looking down from his stone barn, however, Charles Robinson harbored no such illusions about this raid. Below, he watched the drama unfold. He saw the home of Mayor Collamore ablaze, as well as that of Ralph Dix. He saw Lane's house burning. As the sun rose, Robinson also saw through the smoke the machine movements of the guerrillas, their door-to-door calls, the citizens breaking from their homes at a run, the pursuit by men on horseback. The governor also heard the muted pistol fire, the shrieks of wives, the shouts and laughter of killers.

Charles Robinson had founded Lawrence barely nine years before, and a kind fate had allowed him to be absent during the first sack in 1856. Now, to his utter misery and grief, he had a front-row seat to the second, but this, unlike the other, was a much more thorough, much more tragic affair.

***

Larkin Skaggs was accustomed to having things just his way. He had already laid claim to one of the finest horses taken in the Lawrence stables, a magnificent white, and few were the men to contest it. Skaggs was big and burly and strong, and his long hair and beard were grizzled because he was quite a bit older than the rest. But Larkin Skaggs was also exceedingly cruel. When drunk, the bushwhacker was even crueler than usual, and thus when Lydia Stone's sparkling diamond ring caught his eye, it was wrenched from her finger in the same brutal way Skaggs took whatever else he wanted in life.

When Quantrill entered the hotel the attractive young woman made a tearful appeal. Still in the building, Skaggs was located terrorizing the Eldridge captives; after a few words from the leader, he was "obliged" to return the ring. On his way out, Skaggs paused just long enough to glare down at Lydia Stone.

"Miss," he growled, "I'll make you rue this."
***

Not long after she arrived back in town, Sallie Young was taken prisoner and robbed of her pony. But shortly afterward she was put back in the saddle and ordered to go with a squad of rebels to identify men and point out which homes were which. But Sallie wasn't very helpful. Every other house it seemed was that of a brother, a cousin, or an uncle, and with tears rolling down her pretty cheeks she begged the raiders to spare the home and occupants. They did and they did and they did, but after this the girl was allowed to leave whenever she chose. Although she might have left at any time, Sallie tagged along instead and followed the squad wherever it went. Some of the people who caught a glimpse of her were confused: how odd she looked in her natty riding habit, they thought, alongside the rough and ugly men.

Arthur Spicer was also with a group of rebels. Unlike Sallie, however, the saloonkeeper was religiously pointing out men, homes, and businesses. And unlike the girl, Spicer couldn't just pick up and leave anytime he wanted; and to have had so many relatives would have been his end. It was coming soon enough, he thought, when he was handed back to Quantrill.

***

The man with the salty little grin wasn't grinning today; he was praying. As he lay on his back in the dark cellar, squeezed up between a dirt ledge and the kitchen floor, he knew it was only a matter of time before they came.

Like his old boss Jim Lane, Hugh Fisher entertained no rosy notions about tomorrow should he fall into rebel hands today. That morning at Sibley had proven how important he was to George Todd and the Missouri bushwhackers. Nor was he as ill as previously thought. At the initial shout, the Jayhawker jumped from his sickbed and "bounded" out the door. First, he turned his horses loose from the barn, and then with his two young sons, Willie and Charlie, he ran for Mount Oread. The illness had sapped the preacher, however, and the sight of rebel pickets on the crest made him think twice. Sending the boys on alone, Fisher fled back to his South Park home. Elizabeth, with a baby in her arms and a tot by her side, thought her husband was insane to return and said as much, but as he slipped into the tiny cellar the woman made up her mind to do everything she could to save her man.

His wait was not long and Fisher soon heard the sounds—horses to the gate, spurs on the porch, knocks at the door, boots on the kitchen floor.

"Is your husband about the house?"
He was not, lied Elizabeth.
"I know a damned sight better," snapped the guerrilla.

"He's in the cellar; where is it?"

Startled, yet composed, taking the four men to the door, the woman pointed with a straight face: "The cellar is open; if you think he is there, go look for yourselves."

Staring down into the black, a light was demanded. While the mother went upstairs to fetch a lamp, still keeping a grip on herself, the baby was placed in a bushwhacker's arms. Waiting, the man made faces and cooed to keep the infant from crying.

Below, Fisher could hear everything. When he heard his wife returning with the lamp and the cocking of revolvers, his left foot began to tremble uncontrollably. He placed his

right foot over it to keep it still. Then as the light entered the cellar and boots came slowly down the steps, Hugh Fisher's heart and lungs slowed, then stopped, and his whole life flashed across his mind in an instant.

And Elizabeth, holding her baby tight to one ear and pressing her hand hard to the other, went quickly into the front room.

As the rebels reached the bottom, they were forced to stoop under the low ceiling. The man holding the lamp came to where the reverend was laying and stopped. In the glow of the lamp Fisher squinted upon the guerrilla's face, less than two feet from his own. Because of the low ceiling the lamp too was held low; thus the preacher's face remained in the shadow cast by the ledge he lay on. The men looked a bit longer but soon walked back up the stairs.

"The woman told the truth. The rascal has escaped."

There was no time to listen to the echo in her ears. Elizabeth Fisher reached deep down, drew up every ounce of self-control she possessed, then let the words roll.

"You will believe me now, I hope. I told you my husband had gone."
The rebels lingered awhile, robbed the house, torched it, then left one of their men behind to see that the fire spread. But it wasn't in him to stop the woman as she raced from the well to the blaze and back again, and so the reluctant guard just left. When the last of the flames were doused, Elizabeth came to the cellar door and spoke softly to her husband.
"Pa," she said, "Pray and trust in the Lord, and I'll do all I can."

***

After leaving their father, the two Fisher boys became separated somewhere in the hazel and sumac up the hill, and twelve-year-old Willie fell in with Robert Martin, a lad a little older and bigger than himself. Young Martin wore a blue shirt made from his father's old uniform, and he also carried a musket with a cartridge box slung from his shoulder. So when a picket spotted them, he gave chase.

The two boys raced over the hill, side by side, as in a game where home base and blue sky are always just ahead and everything somehow ends as it should. But a blast sounded behind them, and as Robert tripped, Willie felt something wet and warm spray his face. Robert didn't get up to finish the race because half his head was gone. And when Willie wiped his face he found his hand dripping blood, bone, and bits of brain.

Little Charlie Fisher also joined with another boy and together they hid in the cemetery. But a child's superstition forced them to a nearby cotton patch instead.

***

As he crept along the ravine toward home, George Bell soon came to realize the futility of it all. He was cut off. Peering between the weeds and limbs, he could see no hope of reaching his family on the hill. In the streets, in the alleys, around burning homes and barns, only guerrillas were about. To climb the barren slopes of Mount Oread would be suicide. But his nerves cracked. Bell panicked.

Convinced it was just a matter of time before the raiders swarmed in and murdered them all, the county clerk and another man ran into the street. Once in the open and alone, the two abruptly returned to reality. But then, as fortune would have it, they spied a familiar sight—a partially completed brick home. The men dashed in, climbed to the second story, then crawled up among the joists. They could only keep quiet, count the seconds, and pray they hadn't been seen.

But they had.
***

When a gang came to the home on South New Hampshire Street looking for Louis Carpenter, they didn't have far to look. He was right there.

Absorbed with the more important things in life, the good judge had never given much thought to fear; and so, being unfamiliar with it, he could not fully express it. Thus when hate and the big black guns stood around him he didn't react as most men might. He certainly didn't run because running never entered his head. His hands didn't tremble. His bodily functions didn't betray him. His voice didn't waver, and when lethal questions were posed the New Yorker replied straightly and honestly in a clear upstate accent. There was also a strange, kindly quality about him. Some rebels could not resist the temptation and stole a few items from the house, but no one was in a mood any longer to burn it. And certainly no one could bring himself to harm the judge. When the guerrillas left the yard, Carpenter was still standing there while behind him, his bride, Mary, and her sister, Abigail, began to breathe once more.

It was no act—the judge was always like that. A little later, another mob came and, seeing the pretty home, decided to burn it. But once again and as calm as ever, Carpenter met the raiders and sent them away disarmed. The pressure on the women, however, was almost unbearable.

***

It was a miracle! The bushwhacker had just started shooting at the men clinging to the beams when George Bell yelled out. The firing stopped, and everything became still.

It was true. The rebel was actually Bell's old friend. In happier times the two had often broken bread together at the Kansan's table, and each had greatly enjoyed one another's company. Bell and his companion were told to come down, for from that moment on both men were home free. The old friend would talk to the Missourians and straighten things out. The county clerk jumped down followed by the other man, and together the three walked outside. That's where the miracle ended. The crowd of guerrillas standing around them, wild and bitter, didn't care a dime about old acquaintances.

"Shoot him! Shoot him!" was their cry, and not a word was uttered by the old friend. A religious man, Bell asked for a moment to pray. Granted. Finished, the clerk said *amen,* and in a burst of fire his companion fell down and George Bell dropped dead.

From there the gang scaled Mount Oread to complete the job. At home, Mrs. Bell met the raiders and recognized the former guest.

"We have killed your husband," he blandly informed her, "and we have come to burn his house."
***

28 When a group of bushwhackers broke into the home of Edward Fitch and shouted for him to come from hiding, he did. While Sarah and the three terrified children watched, the Massachusetts native walked down the stairs and into the circle of waiting men. As soon as Fitch hit the foot of the stairs he was dead. But just to make certain, the rebel who shot him grabbed another revolver and continued to pump slugs into the corpse until that gun too was emptied. The guerrillas then moved on to rob and torch the home.

As the smoke began to drift about, Sarah pleaded and tried three separate times to remove her husband's body. But three separate times the murderer forbade it. She then ran to retrieve a small painting of Edward, but once more was denied. Finally the woman ceased all efforts and just wandered from room to room watching as her home was destroyed. At last, when the place was engulfed in flames, and with sparks and debris showering about her, a guerrilla forced her to leave.

Sarah walked with her screaming children across the road, sat on the grass, and watched while the home and

Lawrence, Kansas[29] everything she owned crackled and roared over the body of her husband. Above, on an adjoining shed, a small Union flag hung limp. The children, playing soldier a day or two before, had planted it high so that everyone in town could see they were loyal and proud to be Yankees.

Escape was the thing, escape by any means. Politicians, doctors, and merchants bellied toward safety side by side with local lay-abouts and town drunks, crawling in underclothes through flowerbeds and cabbage rows, along weedy lots and ditches until they finally reached what to them seemed a God-sent sanctuary—a cottonwood chicken

coop or a tiny, stinking outhouse. Others simply hurled headlong into wells or shimmied beneath wooden walkways. An outdoor cellar in the center of town with a hidden entrance was a haven where many fled. But more found refuge in the ravine, along the tangled banks of the river, or in Jim Lane's vast cornfield. Often chasing a victim right to the edge of these places, guerrillas always slammed to a halt and galloped away as if expecting a volley of shots to ring out. In the cornfield, scores of thirsty citizens were hidden. Several times the raiders rode along the perimeter, some were for going in. Uncertainty, however, always held them back. A woman living on the hem of the field who had carried water to the fugitives was asked by a group of rebels, who themselves had stopped for water, what was in the corn.

"Go in and see," she replied, in a tone that left no doubts. Had they gone in they wouldn't have found Jim Lane; nor would they have found him anywhere near the field. Instead he was among the bluffs far to the southwest of Lawrence, "on his belly under some bushes."

Escape was the thing; there were other ways. After somehow avoiding the slaughter, the lieutenant of the recruits eluded his pursuers and ran naked into an abandoned shanty. There he found clothes and quickly dressed. In a moment or two he left the hut and walked into the street unnoticed … wearing a dress and bonnet.

Another man burst into a home occupied by three women and begged for help. Soon a noisy gang stomped through the door. Searching the rooms without success, the guerrillas loudly entered the parlor. At this the indignant ladies scolded the rebels to please be quiet and more considerate, since "poor Aunt Betsie" was neither well nor accustomed to such excitement. Sitting in an invalid's chair, "Aunt Betsie" was eyed suspiciously—an old woman's cap, a shawl across her lap, medicine bottles and cups nearby, a "niece" fanning her. Finally, the raiders left and the grateful "Aunt Betsie" and three resourceful women breathed easily once again.

Some men without recourse simply put on the dirtiest, most ragged set of clothes they had and mixed with the Missourians. One dentist went even further. Besides finding money for the guerrillas and guiding them to the best stock of liquor in town, he also joined in and set several homes on fire.

When raiders knocked on their doors, women too employed almost any device in an attempt to save their homes—and very often the men hiding just above or just below.

Where in hell is Fred Read?

Gone east for goods.

Peter Ridenour?

Gone east for goods.

What are your politics?
Sound on the goose.
Has your old man ever stolen any niggers in Missouri? Never been in Missouri.

But as often as not, no amount of pleading or lying would suffice, and a home was put to the torch anyhow. And as soon as the bushwhackers had done their work and moved on, behind them women and children rushed with quilts and slopping buckets of water in an attempt to smother the flames. But as was commonly the case, after gamely battling and subduing a blaze, the soot-smeared ladies looked up only to find another squad approaching with the same intent.

"Put that out if you can!" said an exasperated guerrilla to a woman who had just stopped one fire. When he had gone, she did just that.

***

Those at the home of John Thornton were more persistent. When the straw bed they ignited was put out, the rebels returned and started it again, but this time Nancy Thornton was forced to leave. In a short while, when the husband too appeared and raced out the back, the guerrillas were ready and waiting. A chunk of hot lead burned into Thornton's hip. He didn't go down, however, but turned and fled back into the house. Again the heat became unbearable, and when he reappeared another shot was fired, this time blowing his knee apart. Once more, and followed by his horrified wife, Thornton limped back into his blazing home.

Blinded by smoke, the wounded man soon came out again, leaning on Nancy for support. One of the raiders rode up, took aim, but just before he could jerk the trigger the Kansan lunged for his leg. Thornton was unable to reach the weapon, however, and a slug at point-blank smashed into his eye and exploded out the cheek. Another gun went off and a ball entered his back, ripped down the spine, and tore into a buttock. But still Thornton clung to his attacker. Frustrated and out of ammunition, the bushwhacker tried again.

"I can kill you," he growled as he used the heavy revolver like a hammer to bash the head of the struggling man. At last John Thornton lost his grip and released the leg. But he wasn't dead.

"Stand back and let me try," yelled an impatient guerrilla nearby. "He is the hardest man to kill I ever saw." With that, the enraged attacker let fly every ball in his weapon, striking the target one, two, three times. Thornton stumbled a few steps, then collapsed in a heap. Still doubtful, one of the rebels reared his horse back to stomp the body, then leveled his pistol to fire again.

"For God's sake," shrieked the hysterical wife as she grabbed the horse's bridle, "let him alone, he's killed now."
Satisfied, though amazed at the time and energy needed to do it, the bushwhackers finally moved on.
To preserve it for burial, Nancy managed to drag the body away from the fire to an open space across the street. There, she saw that her dead husband had a wound for almost any given place and was literally soaked in blood from head to toe. Looking closer, however, the woman saw something else—John Thornton was still alive!

***

"Fred, one of them damned nigger-thieving abolitionists ain't dead yet … go and kill him." Neither Harlow Baker nor Simeon Thorp could be sure which of them had moved, but it was certain that one would soon find out.

Since being shot, the two had lain in the street feigning death as the guerrillas rode nearby. When it was clear, they had whispered back and forth to one another describing where they were hit. Baker still had the strength to get up, but dared not. Senator Thorp, hurt much the worse, could not.

The horse stopped beside them and they heard the rebel dismount. When he was kicked over onto his face, Baker knew he was the one. He heard the explosion, felt a sharp sting, and in a rush all the air left his right lung. He grew dizzy and almost fainted, but through the pain Baker was still around to hear "Fred" congratulate himself as he rode back to his pal.

***

This time George Todd came in person. Only a twist of fate had kept him from meeting the preacher that morning near Sibley, and Todd today wanted no stone left unturned.

Despite this, Elizabeth Fisher, as unflappable as ever, insisted that her husband was not at home; that he had gone over the hill long ago and was by now probably well on his way to Topeka. And again the woman boldly invited the doubting rebels to search the house. To his great relief though, Hugh Fisher did not hear the cellar door open, nor did he hear the thud of boots down the steps. He did hear, however, the breaking of chairs and shutters for kindling and a guerrilla swearing to kill his wife if she tried to extinguish the fire.

Ignoring the threat, Elizabeth slammed the door in the raider's face and raced to the well to fill buckets, pans, and tubs. This took time, however, and meanwhile more fires were being set. By the time she returned with the water, her two-story home was hopelessly

ablaze. Running back to the front of the house, the desperate woman turned her energies toward saving the one-story kitchen and trying to keep her husband from being broiled alive. Climbing on the cook stove she doused the ceiling first. Then lugging two tables outside—setting one atop the other—Elizabeth scrambled up to the roof and threw more water on. But just as these flames were quenched much of the burning roof on the house crashed across the kitchen.

Dipping up more water the woman drenched her clothing, then once again waded into the flames. But it was hopeless. At length, as the rebels stood around the home watching her futile efforts, Elizabeth ran for more water and began flooding the kitchen floor under which her husband lay. A neighbor woman, as mystified as the bushwhackers, asked her why she was trying to save a piece of floor when her entire world was burning.

"A memento," she yelled back above the roar. But as the fire and debris fell into the kitchen even

Elizabeth saw that it was only a matter of time. Slipping into the smoke-filled cellar, the frantic woman spoke to where her husband lay.

"You must come out of there or burn alive; I can't keep the fire back any longer."
"Almost roasted," the preacher decided it was his last chance. As he crept out the cellar door Elizabeth quickly threw a dress over him. Then as she lifted a heavy carpet the husband ducked under and, crawling as low and as close to the woman as possible, the two went out of the burning home. While the guerrillas watched on, the carpet was slowly lugged across the yard until the weary wife at last dropped it down beside a small weeping willow. Running back to the house she grabbed chairs, bedding, and other items and stacked them over the rug. And finally, like candles on a cake, the mother sat her two children on top of the heap. After this, she could only wait and watch and pray the rebels didn't suspect.
With guns in their grip, the bushwhackers glanced from the house to the pile and back again. They always looked from a distance, however, and much to the woman's relief, none of them approached.
Sitting quietly by the baby, Elizabeth's little boy was startled when he heard from far below a hoarse voice whisper for water.
"Pa is here somewhere; I heard him speak," he said, looking up to his exhausted mother. The child was quickly hushed and the father ordered from here on out to *keep still*.

***

Not every raider had the stomach for it. Caught up in the pathetic efforts of a crying woman struggling to remove a divan, desk, or piano from her burning home, some could not hold back and soon found themselves wrestling over a piece of furniture just as

frantically as the woman. And after setting a fire, not a few who imagined their hearts stone beyond hope caved in to tearful appeals and joined to save what they had intended to destroy.

After fleeing her home one woman returned to find it ablaze, yet curiously, neatly laid under a tree was a box containing her family photographs. Other Missourians stared like children at the beautiful parlors they entered, and many simply could not bring themselves to destroy the pretty cups, saucers, and heirlooms. Had it been left to them, some would have spared even "marked" homes. But harder sorts were always just around the corner.

"No, God damn the abolitionists," shouted an angry guerrilla. "Why should this house be saved?"
And most were not cold killers. Rummaging through homes, searching for plunder, many obvious hiding places were avoided, and often a raider either winked or turned his back while a man escaped. But others were quick to remind that these same Kansans were the ones who had been in Missouri "killing our people." Most were not cold killers—but enough were.

The Lawrence Massacre

You have killed my husband; let me keep his ring. No matter!

The Germans fared the worst. Their antislavery views were well known and, unlike other men, they couldn't escape by lying; their tongues were judge and jury.

"Nicht versteh," said one when the rebels popped him a question.
"God damn you, we will make you versteh!" they shouted as they shot him dead.
For some time the town's German blacksmith had remained hidden with his little child amid a patch of corn in the Central Park. Later the baby grew restless in the heat and began to cry, prompting several passing guerrillas to venture in. When they left, the father was dead with the child still crying in his once-powerful arms.
At a German home, the people were ordered out while the Missourians sacked the contents and torched the place. Among the occupants, a man on his sickbed had to be carried from the house and placed upon a mattress in the yard. When the gang finished indoors they walked over to the invalid and pulled out their pistols. With guns staring down, the German strained on weakened arms to rise but was instantly blasted back upon his cot.

***

Again a squad came to the home of Judge Carpenter bent on burning and killing. But just as the others did before, the men left quieter than they came.

***

When they had finished with him, Arthur Spicer was brought back to Quantrill at the City Hotel. Despite his earlier threat, however, the guerrilla leader now seemed totally unconcerned at Spicer's return, and after entering the building the saloonkeeper passed discreetly to the rear.

***

Activity picked up on Massachusetts Street as many of the raiders drifted back. Stores gone over lightly before were now cleaned out. Some merchants and clerks were compelled to wait on bushwhackers as if they were regular customers while liquor and food was served and boots, shirts, and hats were tried on. In the apartments above terrified families were forced out, but not until they had filed past the rebels and been robbed.

I'll take that watch!
Give me those earrings!
Fork over them greenbacks!
Shell out, God damn it . . . and be quick about it!

As fewer rebels moved through the lesser streets some people came out and made their escape. With his wife, little daughter, and a friend, the Reverend Richard Cordley left his home and splendid library and quietly threaded his way through the streets. After some "exciting moments" the four entered the brush and walked to the river-bank. There, in a

marvelous stroke of luck, an alert friend on the opposite shore recognized the Cordleys and, risking his own life, rowed a boat across and ferried the group to safety. One man and his wife stuffed a change of clothes into a pillow slip, sat their children in a play wagon, and simply walked away.

If one could muster the courage, getting through the streets and beyond the first line of pickets was to escape, for those patrolling further out—farmers and boys mostly—showed little inclination to stop or harm the refugees. Most citizens, though, remained fast in the same places they had throughout the morning—whether indoors or out.

One man holding an umbrella sat in the open undisturbed, shading his wife and child. Another, after being chased and shot at, fell and was immediately covered by his wife. Long after the assailants had left the woman continued to wail and shriek. Afraid she would draw even more attention his way, the husband at last whispered, "For God's sake, wife, don't take on so. I don't know if I'm even hit."

After helping the bushwhackers load packhorses, the two young clerks at R & B's, still barefoot and half-clad, eased off to the bushes and raced to the river. The frightened New Yorker saw no point in stopping there, however, and after swimming the Kaw he sprinted up the Leavenworth Road.

At last, the Eldridge House, thus far spared though picked clean from "cellar to garret," was put to the torch. As some raiders were busy spreading the fire on the ground floor, a woman ran up screaming that a black baby, left by its mother and forgotten in the excitement, still remained inside. After listening for a moment, the men went on with their work.

"Burn the God damn little brat," was the grim reply.

The fires caught, then climbed rapidly to the fourth floor. In a very short time "the finest building in Kansas"— plush carpets, chandeliers, music, dancing, laughter, all— was enveloped in flames.

On the adjacent corner the courthouse went up. Across the street from that, Danver's Ice Cream Saloon burned, and so on down the street until both sides were completely ablaze. And while the fires were set the rebels celebrated; walking or riding through the street in fancy new clothes and shiny black boots, wearing rings on their fingers and gold chains and crosses from their necks; gulping down canned lobster, oysters, and figs; smoking black cigars; guzzling beer, brandy, and French champagne; waving hats in the air as the huge liberty flag was dragged past them in the dust. From time to time there were small explosions as stocks of powder and sealed canisters heated, and the acrid smell of tar and oil mingled with the sweet scent of burning tea and molasses.

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At the end of the business district, a large gang of drunks spotted Dan Palmer and a friend standing in the door of Palmer's gun shop. Before they could duck back in both were shot and wounded.

While some of the bushwhackers set the building on fire, others stood the two men up and bound them together with rope. Then, when the flames caught and began to roar, the startled captives were pitched inside. Wild with fright, Palmer and his friend regained their footing and struggled out the door, pleading with the rebels for mercy. But amid hellish laughter and waving pistols the men were again hurled into the furnace. At last the rope broke, but there was nowhere to run. By this time only Palmer was able to rise. Standing in the flames, arms reaching for heaven, he screamed above the roar, "O God, save us!" This brought a new round of applause and laughter. Soon, the cries inside ceased and the drunken gang moved on.

***

Except for a number of pickets, by 9 AM most of the raiders had drifted back to the South Park and much of the residential area was left deserted. That's when Mary, Abigail, and Louis Carpenter "began to breathe again." But then there was another violent pound on the door. As they had done all morning, the family kept its composure, and while Mary went to the door the judge came down the stairs to deal with these rebels as he had the rest.

The door was opened. Stepping partway in, a stonefaced guerrilla stared at the judge, then asked him where he was from.

"New York," came the even reply.
"It is you New York fellows that are doing the mischief in Missouri," was the cold comment. The rebel raised his pistol and fired.
Breaking from the door, the wounded man bounded up the stairs and into a bedroom. Pushing Mary aside, the guerrilla gave chase. As his pursuer was searching the rooms above Carpenter slipped by and ran to the basement. But a rebel below saw this, and when his friend came down, the two found windows leading into the basement and opened fire. The judge was hit immediately. And because the room was unfinished there was nowhere to hide. Helplessly, Carpenter could only flatten himself against the walls and try to dodge the bullets. As the raiders paused to reload, the blood gathered in pools at the victim’s feet. Finally, with no other hope, Carpenter broke for the stairs leading outside. Once in the yard, however, he stumbled and fell and was unable to rise.
As the guerrillas approached, Mary ran screaming to her husband's side and covered his head with her arms. Walking around them several paces, a bushwhacker at last bent

down, jerked up one of Mary's arms, jammed in his pistol, then fired. Within inches of her own, the judge's head shuddered for an instant, then splashed apart.

***

A lone rebel walked to where Harlow Baker was lying and stopped. Partially turned on its side, he looked down at the dusty body for a moment, at the blood, black and caked on the hand, neck, and back.

"Poor devil," he muttered.

Pulling out a sharp knife the bushwhacker knelt down and ripped open a pocket. Finding nothing he rolled the body over and slashed the other. Again nothing. Spotting Baker's hat, the man mumbled that at least here was something, and a good one at that. Taking his prize, the man walked back into town.

***

At last the pickets rode in and the entire force of guerrillas converged on the South Park and began forming. Packhorses high with plunder were brought up, as was an ambulance. A large, fat ox was selected, killed, skinned, quartered, then quickly stored for travel. Amid the movement and general excitement, Quantrill found the young guide, and handing him a new suit of clothes and the reins to a fresh pony, the boy was pointed toward home. The rebel leader then said goodbye to his friend Nathan Stone, his wife and son and daughter Lydia, and hoped that someday, some place they might meet during happier times.

"The ladies of Lawrence were brave and plucky," he confided to someone before he left, "but the men … were a pack of cowards."

Quantrill then joined his command. And, at a little past nine, with the smoke from Massachusetts Street rolling up like the walls of some towering black canyon, the raiders moved south and the long, uncertain retreat to Missouri began.

Several minutes passed. Only the sounds of the inferno were heard in the deserted streets. Across the river, the squad of soldiers watched intently. Finally, with a few citizens they boarded the ferry and inched toward the town.

But one man was not quite finished. Although he had bragged about the streets that eleven Kansans had been sent to hell by his gun, for Larkin Skaggs this was still not enough. Skulking around until Quantrill left, Skaggs galloped back and pulled up beside the City Hotel.

"All you God damned sons of bitches come in front!" he shouted. *"Come right out here!"* Foolishly, many did step out the door. But others, including Lydia Stone, either remained inside or, like her brother, dove out the back. As they filed down the steps, men and women were ordered into separate lines, and while waiting for the rest to appear, Skaggs, terribly drunk and teetering in his saddle, asked one of the captives where he was from.
"Central Ohio," answered the man. He was instantly shot.
"That is worse than Kansas," growled the bushwhacker.
Another round was fired into the hotel itself which brought an immediate plea from the owner, Nathan Stone. Without a word Skaggs turned and fired again, striking the innkeeper flush in the abdomen. While the screaming people fled the front of the hotel, more jumped out the back. Spying a boat, two men quickly pushed off from shore. In their haste, however, they failed to attach one oar properly and the two furiously paddled around and around in circles as the current carried them down the river.
Hearing the gunfire and seeing the renewed exodus, the men crossing on the ferry quickly returned to the north shore.
Growing impatient, Skaggs finally wheeled and rode back through town. After killing a man along the way and chasing another, the burly bushwhacker trotted leisurely from Lawrence down the California Road, confident that Quantrill had left the way he had come. He soon realized the mistake, however, when he saw farmers coming in his direction. Spurring cross-country toward Eudora, the drunken man weaved and wobbled in the saddle as the big white horse raced through fields leaping fences and ditches. But more men were riding from that way, and cornered, Skaggs was finally captured and taken toward Lawrence.
When the party reached the outskirts and learned what had taken place, the prisoner without further ado was slain on the spot.

***

Slowly, slowly the people began to come out—peering cautiously from the brushy ravine, parting carefully the stalks in the cornfield. The ferry started inching over again. Governor Robinson stepped out of his stone barn. The county sheriff crept up from under his floor. A man who had feigned death even though he lay near a building on fire rose with the clothes burned from his back. And Harlow Baker, too, on painfully weak legs pulled himself up and staggered to the house. Others emerged from the hidden cellar in the center of town, popped up from tomato patches, or, dripping wet, gazed over the mouth of a well. What they saw when they came out was overwhelming.

Everywhere one turned, the enormity of the raid attacked the senses. Those cut off, those who thought their experience an isolated case, were numbed to learn that similar acts had been going on all around the city. Like a twister it had come so swiftly, so tremendously,

so utterly—yet like a twister it too had gone so quietly and completely that many were confused and still had no conception of time. And the bodies…no one had expected this.

"One saw the dead everywhere," said the Reverend Cordley as he moved through the town, "on the sidewalks, in the streets, among the weeds in the gardens."

And the day was actually darker than it had begun. Burning homes and barns sent spires of smoke upward until they converged to form a huge pall over the city, blotting out the sun and sky. Massachusetts Street was a raging wall of flame and churning black clouds. Crunching timber and toppling bricks fed the roar, and the heat was so intense that none dared enter the street. Even the sidewalks were burning. And everywhere was the suffocating dark fog. Women, some carrying babies in their arms, ran through the streets shielding their faces from the fire, crying and screaming for husbands and sons. Some, like Charles and Sara Robinson, found one another.

Then, down a side street, flaying the hide of a plow horse and shouting at the top of his lungs came Jim Lane trailed by several farmers. "Follow them boys," cried the senator as he passed, "let us follow them." Some did respond, and together they galloped south. But even had more felt the inclination, there simply were no horses left in town.

***

By noon a goodly number of citizens had straggled back to town as had curiosity-seekers from the countryside. And by this time even Hugh Fisher, sweltering all morning under the rug and furniture, felt safe enough to crawl from his torrid hiding place to get a drink of water.

Later, as the fires subsided, several men began the grisly task of trying to retrieve the dead and wounded. One of those thus engaged was George Deitzler. At first glance the victims nearest the fires were thought to be blacks. Coming closer, however, the old general was shocked to discover that the corpses were not Negroes, but white men "completely roasted. The bodies…crisped and nearly black." Reluctantly, Deitzler bent down to pull a man up, but to his horror as he yanked he merely came away with two chunks of steaming dark flesh. Reeling backward, the general retched and had to leave. Most others, try as they may, could fare no better and turned away "crying like children."

One corpse lay on a sidewalk near a fire. The body was normal in every respect except that the skin of the head had been burned away, leaving only a grinning skull. Another man was half body, half skeleton. Others had rendered down into a "shapeless mass." And without a trace of wind the stench of cooked flesh weighed like a blanket in the hot fog. Relegated to stronger sorts, recovery did go on.

After the pews were moved out, many of the dead and wounded were taken to the Methodist Church. While two physicians probed an ugly hole in a man's face, searching for a lodged ball, another, lacking both medicine and instruments, performed delicate surgery using only a sharp penknife. Lying in a corner, "half-wit" Jo Eldridge, also shot in the face, raved deliriously. Crying women, themselves on the verge of collapse, tried to help those waiting by bringing water, cleaning wounds, and fighting off the swarms of blowflies. The mangled bodies of Ralph and Steve Dix were brought in and laid out; Ben Johnson, some Germans, and others not recognizable were also carried up the steps. In his rush to get the wounded indoors, one minister keeled over from exhaustion. Elsewhere it was much the same as people waited for the few available doctors.

A young woman, just as confused and frightened as she had been all morning long, ran into the Griswold home for comfort. In the back parlor she first saw Mrs. Baker fanning her husband who lay on the bed, his clothes bathed in blood. Fleeing into the dining room, the girl suddenly froze at the sight of Doctor Griswold and Josiah Trask stiff, white, and stretched side by side on the dinner table. In the front parlor she glanced in to see Senator Thorp, twisted and rolling in terrible agony, his clothes black with blood and dust. He was struggling to speak to his wife but couldn't. Bearing no more, the sickened young woman fled the house entirely.

Just up the street, surrounded by the smoldering ruins of her home, Julia Collamore could get no response from either her husband or the servant as she shouted into the well. When a close friend arrived, he volunteered to go down. Tying a cord around himself, and with the aid of two men to lower him, the friend entered the hole. About halfway down those above felt a sharp yank and frantically began to pull the man up. The strain was too great, however, and the cord snapped. But to the surprise of everyone above, there was no cry for help from below.

Despite everything, some paused a moment to behold the phenomenon. Flocks of killdeer, attracted for some reason, flew about carefree from yard to yard, calling their sprightly refrain.

***

Throughout the afternoon and into the evening the people continued to trickle back. Some returned wearing the same nightshirt they had awakened in, while not a few husbands came back in the dresses that had enabled their escape. Strong men, finding a dear friend whom they had presumed dead, fell into one another's arms and wept. The devout knelt in circles and prayed.

Those who had fled Shantytown that morning also began appearing, coming across the river or out of the woods. One black, atop a white horse, rode bareback down

Massachusetts Street singing with all his might "John Brown's Body." Behind, with a rope around its neck, he dragged the naked corpse of Larkin Skaggs. With other former slaves, the rider hauled the body to the Central Park and tried to burn it.

As the fires cooled and gardens and weedy lots were combed, more dead were discovered. The floor of the Methodist Church filled until there was no room. Forty identification tags had already been provided, but for others only a number distinguished each from the next disfigured form. Robert Martin, killed by the side of young Willie Fisher, was found and carried down from Mount Oread in the arms of his crying father. Charlie and Willie Fisher also returned, and the grateful parents sped to heaven their thanks and bowed to pray. But both Elizabeth and Hugh couldn't help noticing that there was something different about Willie; he was not the same Willie who had left that morning.

It wasn't so easy for editor John Speer. Of his three sons, the youngest was alive and with his mother. Another son, Junior, was dead. Someone said he was murdered while running along a street, shot by a mounted rebel dragging the Union flag. But the other son, seventeen-yearold Robbie, was still missing. Speer refused to believe that Robbie too was gone. And so, covered with soot and ash, the father kept up his search, calling out as the night descended.

I want you to help me find my boy. They have killed one, and the other I cannot find.
***

"The fires were still glowing in the cellars," noted the Reverend Cordley as he moved through the darkened streets. "The brick and stone walls were … standing bare and blackened. The cellars between looked like great caverns with furnaces glowing in the depths … Here and there among the embers could be seen the bones of those who had perished."

John Speer and others seeking a son, a brother, a husband were praying that the bones they saw down among the cinder and fire were not those of the loved ones they sought.

That night the dogs howled without ceasing, and for miles around a vast angry glow was seen throbbing in the skies over Lawrence.

***

Saturday, August 22, 1863. Hardly had glint of dawn reached Lawrence when the weary people, straining to gain a few minutes of sleep, were jolted by a long, piercing scream heard throughout the town. Followed to its source, a woman was discovered in a gutted building sitting among the rubble. Her husband, she feared, had been shot and burned

there the day before, and after searching the wife had found his remains at last—a blackened skull that she hugged to her breast.

This chilling scene "added much to the … sadness and horror which filled every heart," said a viewer, and stamped an accent on what was already becoming known as "Black Friday."

There was no awakening from the nightmare. Massachusetts Street, normally a hive of activity on Saturday, was black and idle now, only a jagged gash through piles of ash and debris. Red coals still glowed in the basements. At the south end of the street, two stores remained standing, to the north, by the river, several more stood, including the armory with weapons intact. In between, all else was ruin. Vermont and New Hampshire streets were much the same—a barn, the icehouse, the City Hotel, a home in which George Todd had taken breakfast and left his voucher of safety.

In the residential area the condition was somewhat better. Although close to one hundred homes were destroyed, many of these the beautiful structures of West Lawrence, anyone could see how much worse it might have been. Dozens of houses were torched and torched again only to be saved by the women. And for those not doused, the absence of wind prevented the flames from leaping to a neighboring home. Most brick and stone dwellings stood untouched, and because of the soldiers, all the houses along the river, including the Robinson mansion, went unscathed. Except for a Negro church, every other still stood. The county land records were somehow preserved. But all this in itself, as the citizens viewed things, was small cause for thanksgiving. The bushwhackers had been meticulous. The town was devastated.

"Lawrence," wrote one, "is as much destroyed as though an earth quake had buried it in ruins."

And even had there been anything left to buy, there simply was nothing left to buy it with, for very little money remained. Of the three banks in town, two were robbed of every cent and the third spared only because a stubborn vault could not be blown. Practically all the cash and merchandise in the stores and offices was stolen or burned, and among the citizenry as a whole, the gold, silver, jewels, notes, and watches that were not stolen outright were generally lost or destroyed in the confusion. Much of the furniture, clothing, shoes, and linen were also gone. Most people, young and old, wore the same grimy apparel in which they had come away twenty-four hours before. In addition, there was virtually no food in the town.

Although the suffering and privation were extreme, the material loss paled beside that of the human. At first glance even the most sanguinary estimate placed the toll of dead at no more than sixty, a staggering number considering that nearly all were unarmed civilians. But even this grim figure was soon surpassed as more victims were discovered hourly. When workers finally entered the Collamore well they brought up three dripping bodies

—the mayor, his servant, and the would-be rescuer, all dead. After filling the Griswold home with hideous screams and groans, Simeon Thorp, in terrible agony, at last succumbed. As for the photographer, William Laurie, his flight was ended. Kansas City … Shawnee … the war had overtaken him once and for all in faraway Lawrence. The charred bones of other victims were raked in from the embers or found sprawled among the weeds and gardens. The dead seemed to crowd the living as the toll grew to one hundred and climbed.

The human loss was as unfathomable as the material loss was seemingly irreparable. There was little talk of rebuilding. Fear of a similar occurrence ran so high that it seemed foolish to do so, and some raiders had even warned that Lawrence must be entirely abandoned or they would return. The herculean task of trying to reconstruct their world also caused many to despair. But perhaps most disappointing and unbearable of all was the lack of anything tangible to strike at; the inability to reach out and smash the authors of so much misery and woe. For some, at least, this simple, savage act could not but help ease the pain and frustration.

Throughout the morning, travelers, emigrants, teamsters, and curiosity-seekers, jammed on the main roads for twenty-four hours, began to stream into town. One unsuspecting arrival quickly found himself surrounded by an angry mob. Identified as a proslavery man and active during the territorial struggle, he was led away to the barn by the river. There, despite pleas to the contrary, he was accused of being a spy for Quantrill, and being thus charged he was promptly convicted. A noose was thrown around his neck, and in a few moments the stunned man was drawn up and left kicking in the air. There was no hard evidence, as most admitted, but the victim was a Missourian, and that was close enough.

After the Raid

The body was then cut down and given to a black on horseback, who galloped through the streets followed by a snarling crowd. As the corpse was dragged along, the clothes tore away and the mob pelted it with rocks, sticks, and anything else available, each person dealing their share on the lonely trophy. Four other men blundered into town and were collared under the same pretext. Fortunately for them—and for consciences later on—they were only held, not hanged.

Sallie Young was next. Hooted and jeered viciously wherever she went, the young woman was arrested, accused of collaborating with the raiders, then confined to await transfer to Fort Leavenworth. The fury temporarily vented, Lawrence turned to more pressing matters.

As the morning wore on and the temperature rose, the stench from the corpses became insufferable. Already, many bodies had swollen so great that the clothing had burst, revealing grotesque wounds "full of flies & worms." Frantically, the work began to identify the victims and get them under ground as rapidly as possible. There was little wood left and certainly no coffins. Many of the carpenters were either dead or wounded and nearly all the tools of the trade destroyed. Nevertheless, the citizens began. Oak and walnut logs were sawn and fashioned into rough boards. Most nails had melted in the

kegs, but enough good ones were found and the planks were soon joined to form crude boxes. The dead were quickly deposited and the covers hammered down. For many, "it sounded rather harsh … to have the lid *nailed* over the bodies of their loved ones." But there simply was no time for anything more elaborate, especially since the threat of epidemic increased with every hour.

When the Methodist Church was full, bodies were taken to other churches. Not all victims remained in town. After identification, three corpses, including that of the Irishman, Jim O'Neill, were loaded onto a wagon and returned to Lecompton for burial. Coming from the opposite direction, farmers brought fruit and vegetables and gave freely. And from Leavenworth the first real relief came when several wagons loaded with food, clothing, medical supplies, and caskets arrived.

Throughout the day and into the night the tempo increased and the sounds of the terrible work continued. At the cemetery atop Mount Oread, a ghostlike gathering moved in an arc of lamp-light, and some of the boxes were at last lowered down. Slowly the recovery began.

***

When he wasn't helping out around town, Peter Ridenour was at the bedside of his friend. "Well, Mr. Ridenour, I am gone up," Harlow Baker had whispered when his partner rushed into the room on Friday. But though he wasn't given much hope by others and could barely breathe, Baker surprised everyone, including himself, by continuing to hang on.

And so the old friend stayed by his side, waiting for the end—fetching ice, tending the wounds, chatting. Jokingly, Ridenour admitted

that the only reason he was*Peter Ridenour*sitting around this moment

was because of a few potato plants and a garden bed he'd hugged so dearly that a leaf might have covered him. His home was gone, he added, even though he had naively taken the precaution of locking the door. But the two young clerks had made it. After running so long and hard that his feet bled, the athletic New Yorker hadn't stopped until he had reached Leavenworth. There, he went straight to a family friend, Governor Tom Carney, and borrowed money enough for clothes and a one-way ticket east. But after some rest and reflection he had hesitated. The boy had come back today on the Leavenworth stage. Although admittedly he had never been so scared in his life, not even at Gettysburg, the

youth discovered that indeed he had survived the battlefield and now, although his feet were very tired and sore, he had survived Black Friday as well.

Ridenour didn't mention to his partner that the business was wiped out. Five years of savings had vanished in a blink when the banks were looted. The store's huge inventory was also gone and although their insurance covered most everything, including fire, a clause excluded "invading enemies." There were also many out-standing debts and no way to meet them. Although he didn't burden his friend with business matters, Peter Ridenour had already taken the first faint look down the long road back. He was yet young and strong and energetic and his name was respected by all. And if he lived long enough, every creditor would get his due. The store's safe with the books and a modest sum of cash had somehow weathered the storm, and if one put stock in such things, there was a benign omen of sorts—the salt wagons from Leavenworth had arrived and were now parked outside the gutted store.

But while he sat and waited and watched his old friend suffer, the thought uppermost on Mr. Ridenour's mind was not salt or creditors or even the store, but whether the partnership, the friendship would continue as always or if the "B" would yet be stricken from R&B.

***

Early Sunday morning at the usual time, work was set aside while a few citizens gathered to worship. They were women and children mostly at the Reverend Cordley's church, dirty and disheveled and dressed in men's work clothes. No one said much. For some, the press of the past two days had been a sore test of faith, and a moment's respite to collect their thoughts and drift in meditation was a welcome balm. There were whispers and silent prayers and then a passage from Psalms, verse 79:

O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance. They have laid Jerusalem in heaps. The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the heaven and the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of earth. Their blood have shed they like water round about Jerusalem, and there was none to bury them.

After a moment more of silence, work was resumed. Again, as the heat of the day approached, workers were made aware of their dilemma. The coffin building was not keeping pace with the decay of the bodies. The caskets that came from Leavenworth helped, but there simply weren't enough coffins there, nor in all Kansas to meet the needs. And more victims were being found. At last, in desperation, it was decided to dispense with formalities altogether and inter the more advanced cases with as much haste as possible. Into a long, deep trench gouged from the cemetery ground, forty-seven black and bloating bodies were finally lowered down. Similar burials, like that of Judge Carpenter and Edward Fitch, took place in backyards. With this, some of the terrible trauma and urgency began mercifully to wear off.

More help came from the countryside and another large wagon train of food, clothing, and supplies arrived from Leavenworth. Visitors continued to enter the city, some to aid and some simply to gawk and assess the destruction. Early estimates placed the damage in the millions of dollars, with over $250,000 stolen in currency alone. Almost every businessman and merchant was totally cleaned out. Still, there were increasing murmurs of rebuilding and renewed investments. Flagging spirits began to revive somewhat as a few took heart.

Included among the strangers in town were a number of correspondents and illustrators from large Eastern newspapers who began sketching scenes and taking down eyewitness accounts. A few unabashed individuals came forward with their stories. One black related that when the raiders had entered Lawrence on Friday morning, he had dashed over the meadows south of town and hid in a tree above the Wakarusa, out-legging his imagined pursuers and establishing some kind of record for the three-mile course. When asked about the feat, his simple reply: "The prairie just came to me." Another man, a dentist, described his escape and return to Lawrence and his utter amazement to find that, though everything else was gone, the rebels had entirely overlooked his inventory of gold and silver plate.

Others had similar tales to tell, though not always so jocose. They told of a morning replete with hairbreadth escapes and terror, of miracles, irony, and death. But as the journalists scribbled away, always from each new tale there surfaced the same consistent theme—the steely defiance and grit of the women. Almost all their acts, although carried out under fantastic duress, were marked by an uncanny degree of calmness and courage. Instances of their heroism, their "sand," ran on. There was Lydia Stone: When the Eldridge prisoners became frightened of retaliation, the young woman, risking her own life, raced down the riverbank in the teeth of the soldiers' bullets waving a hanky for them to stop. There was Kate Riggs: By grabbing the horse's bridle and hanging on until she had been dragged around the house and over a woodpile, the tenacious woman succeeded in saving her husband Sam from the monster Skaggs. There were Elizabeth Fisher, Eliza Turner, and a score of other equally doughty heroines.

And never had female ingenuity been better displayed, from the "nieces" of "Aunt Betsie" to the woman who saved not only a featherbed to sleep on but a neighbor man as well whom she rolled up inside and carried to safety. Another woman fooled the rebels by burning oily rags in kettles, thereby making it appear that her home was engulfed in flames.

And even after their bravery and resourcefulness saved many a man and home, the women's work had but begun. When the initial shock had passed, many, like the "ministering angel" Lydia Stone, carried on, moving with quiet grace among the crowds of victims, "attending to their wants and speaking words of comfort and cheer."

As Sunday wore on, the women, arms scorched, hair singed, continued their labors with an air of increasing confidence. Some optimistically saw in their great trial a hidden treasure. Although they left little else in Lawrence, the guerrillas overlooked something very precious nonetheless, something that could not be burned with a torch or strapped on a packhorse: Courage…the only thing in life that really mattered. When all else was taken, this at least remained and gleamed more brilliantly than ever before. Then others took note and drew inspiration from a familiar sight at the river's edge. Amid the ruin and devastation the old liberty pole stood straight and tall, defiantly holding its ground. Even the tortuous hot spell was at an end. Late in the day a refreshing north wind kicked up, clearing and cooling the air. If the truth be known, for many of these women, as well as the surviving men, there was within them the dawning of that warm and golden glow that shines only in the hearts of those who have faced off with the worst in life and come away victorious. For Lawrence, the worst had come. The trial had passed. There was nothing more from life to fear.

***

As the work progressed into the evening, a lookout on Mount Oread, watching the activity below, happened to glance south toward the Wakarusa. There to his horror he saw rising from the valley floor an all-too-familiar sight— smoke and flame. Without a second thought the rider flew down the hill and galloped into town, screaming with all the power in his lungs, "They are coming again, they are coming again! Run for your lives, run for your lives!"

With these startling words reserves cracked, then crumbled, and suddenly there was nothing left. In a moment, as if from one mind, panic seized all, and like a cannon shot the race from Lawrence instantly became a mad stampede. Someone rang the armory bell but no one was fool enough to rally. Men who had naively held to their homes at the onset of the first raid and who thus experienced the most terrifying hours of their lives didn't wait around for the second, but broke from town at a run, hair streaming in the wind. Women, whose courage hadn't wavered during the Friday attack and whose poise had been a comfort to all, now caved in completely and became "utterly unstrung." Men, women, children—all raced blindly, filling the streets with a bedlam of sobs, shrieks, and shouts, expecting the slaughter to overtake them with every bound.

Run for your life ... Quantrill is coming back and will kill all of us!
Run to the country, Quantrill is coming!
Take your children and run ... Quantrill is coming!

After a few short minutes the dust finally settled. The town was deserted. Except for a few wounded, not a soul, black or white, resident or visitor, was left in Lawrence. As time passed, men on the opposite shore anxiously watched for the attack to begin. But mysteriously, there was only silence. Shortly, one hundred citizens recovered sufficiently

to cross back and pass out weapons from the armory. Their plans for a stand were for naught, however, for they soon learned the cause of the lookout's alarm—imprudently, a farmer had chosen this moment to burn off a field of straw.

Knowledge of the error came too late to reach the majority of people, however. Some were far away and still running while others were even further along and had no intention of ever stopping, like the clerk at R & B's, who this time would not pull up until he reached New York and absolute safety. But for the rest, many carrying footsore children, there was no run left, and they simply alit in fields and thickets fringing the town.

That night proved to be one of the coldest, cruelest summer nights in border memory. The temperature plunged, the rain and hail came in sheets, the lightning cracked, the thunder roared, and the wind blew with all the fury of a cyclone. But still—soaked, frozen, and huddled as they were—few ventured back, for the wind and cold and rain were far preferable to Lawrence, where it was firmly believed Quantrill was adding the final touches to the bloody work begun on Friday.

One of these miserable refugees, seeking an answer to it all, later questioned his aged father. "Why have we been so terribly punished? Why so infinitely worse than any other place in all the history of this war? Why beyond comparison and precedent?" After brief reflection on the territorial days of the fifties, the war on the border and the sagging fortunes of the South in the sixties, of the bloody days of rampage when Lane, Jennison, and their Jayhawkers had turned western Missouri inside out, the son found the answer to his own question.

"lt has come," he finally admitted, "and they have had their revenge."
But another, angrier than the first, and speaking for a great many more than the first, considered the scales once more uneven.
"Oh! God!" he implored heaven, "Who shall avenge?"

PART TWO

F

EW American events have been more written about than "Custer's Last Stand." This famous clash of cultures which occurred in far-off Montana during

the US centennial celebration in 1876 has all the elements to pull a reader in—George Armstrong Custer, the brash, vain, but charismatic white leader; his famed regiment, the hard-riding, hard-fighting 7th Cavalry; the Sioux chiefs, Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull,

each trying to fend off fate; the battle, the massacre, so utter, so final, and yet so mysterious and haunting with so many questions yet unanswered.

For nearly a hundred and fifty years writers, historians, archaeologists, movie makers, and generations of little boys have tried to understand what happened on that windswept ridge above the rippling waters of the Little Bighorn. Thus far, the best that we can do is accept that we shall probably never know.

Curiously, the one thing we most certainly know much about, but the one thing continually left out of virtually every narrative of the battle, is what the relief column found when they reached the site several days later.

The following is from my book, *Scalp Dance—Indian Warfare on the High Plains, 1865-1879*.

A PERFECT SILENCE

O

N the evening of June 21, 1876, the steamboat *Far West* lay docked along the normally placid Yellowstone River of Montana. All about the

makeshift landing was noise and movement as soldiers and sailors unloaded supplies in preparation for the big scout, set to depart the following day. Spirits were high among officers of the 7th Cavalry. Winfield Scott Edgerly sat chatting and joking with others outside headquarters.

"Soon the General came out of his tent," Lieutenant Edgerly recalled, "and I said ‘General, won’t we step high if we get those fellows!’ He replied, ‘Won’t we!’ adding, ‘It all depends on you young officers. We can’t get Indians without hard riding and plenty of it!’"

George Custer’s optimism in locating the normally elusive Indian was based not only on his pride and trust in his beloved 7th, but on the latest reports as well. While scouting the upper Rosebud, Major Marcus Reno had struck a large trail crossing the divide toward the Little Bighorn. Along the banks of that obscure and often misnamed stream, Custer felt he would find 1,000 to 1,500 warriors of the allied tribes, perhaps fewer, but certainly no more. All the same, his 600 men could expect to be outnumbered two to one. Still, the colonel was not troubled by the odds, nor did he doubt the outcome of the pending engagement.

Custer's confidence was well-founded. After the 7th's victories on the southern Plains in the 1860s and after besting Crazy Horse on the Yellowstone in 1873, his faith in the unit bordered on invincibility and in his heart he felt the regiment could go wherever he cared to lead it. When an additional battalion was offered by General Alfred Terry as a precaution, the proud colonel politely refused. Far from fearing an encounter, Custer hoped to keep the Indians from scattering, as they tended to do. Consequently, not only did he opt for pack mules over the slower supply wagons, but he also chose to leave a battery of Gatling guns parked at the *Far West.*

Not everyone was so confident of finding Indians; James DeWolf, for one, was dubious. Dr. DeWolf—only just returned from Reno's scout—was taking time this night to pen a last letter to his wife: "We found no Indians, not one. All old trails. They seem to be moving west and are driving the buffalo. I think it is very clear that we shall not see an Indian this summer."

Frederick Benteen agreed. "Many of us are of the opinion," the captain wrote to his wife, "that we shall have no opportunities of exhibiting our prowess on redskins— & I am one of these." Among the more knowledgeable, however, among those whose life on the Plains had developed in them almost a sixth sense, something strange and sinister was in the air. Many, like Custer's chief of scouts, "Lonesome" Charley Reynolds, felt the coming campaign would witness "the greatest Indian battle ever fought on this continent." And the colonel's friend and favorite guide, Bloody Knife, already had a terrible vision of what he would find beside the clear and sparkling waters of the "Little Horn."

Whether it was a "fight or foot race," most troopers, like bugler Henry Dose, realized their job would not end until Sitting Bull and the Sioux had been forced onto a reservation: "I wish for mine part we would meet him tomorrow. Sergt. Botzer and me come to the conclusion, it is better anyhow to be home baking flapjacks. When we get home we will pay up for this, and bake flapjacks all the time."

As the only newsman with the 7th, Mark Kellogg was working far into the night, finishing up a long dispatch to the New York *Herald,* describing the events of the past few days and what was likely to come. "And now," he scribbled, "a word for the most peculiar genius in the army."

[A] man of strong impulses, of great hearted friendships and bitter enmities, of quick, nervous temperament, undaunted courage, will and determination; a

man possessing
electrical mental
capacity and of iron

frame and
constitution; a
brave, faithful,

gallant soldier, who *Mark Kellogg* has warm friends
and bitter enemies; the hardest rider, the greatest pusher, with the most untiring vigilance, overcoming seeming impossibilities, and with an ambition to succeed in all things he undertakes; a man to do right, as he construes the right, in every case; one respected and beloved by his followers, who would freely follow him into the 'jaws of hell.' Of Lieutenant Colonel G. A. Custer I am now writing. Do not think I am over-drawing the picture. The pen picture is true to life, and is drawn not only from actual observation, but from an experience that cannot mislead me.

Near midnight, as the dark, swirling Yellowstone slid by and made soothing sounds "like that of a soft wind rustling in the tall grass," Kellogg signed off with a final note to his boss back in Bismarck.

We leave [up] the Rosebud to-morrow, and by the time this reaches you we will have met and fought the red devils, with what results remains to be seen. I go with Custer and will be at the death.

***

Next morning, amid a flurry of last-minute activity, General Terry gave Custer his parting instructions. Unlike normal directives, Terry's words were suggestions, not commands, for, as the general explained, "The Department Commander places too much confidence in your zeal, energy, and ability to wish to impose upon you precise orders which might hamper your action."

As the regiment prepared to mount, Custer advised his Crow and Ree guides that a fight was looming and they should sing their death songs. "Custer had a heart like an Indian," one of the scouts said. "If we ever left out one thing in our ceremonies he always suggested it to us. We got on our horses and rode around, singing the songs. Then we fell in behind Custer."

Lieutenant Edward Godfrey:

At twelve o'clock, noon, on the 22nd of June, the 'Forward' was sounded, and the regiment marched out of camp, each troop followed by its pack mules. Generals Terry, Gibbon and Custer stationed themselves near our line of march and reviewed the regiment. General Terry had a pleasant word for each officer as he returned the salute.

Like the famous commander they so proudly paraded past, the veteran rank and file exuded self-confidence. Private Charles Windolph:

You felt like you were somebody when you were on a good horse, with a carbine dangling…and a Colt army revolver strapped on your hip.…You were a cavalryman of the Seventh Regiment. You were part of a proud outfit that had a fighting reputation, and you were ready for a fight or a frolic.

"[C]olumn of fours, guidons flying, trumpets sounding.… We started out in 'Grand Galore,'" wrote Captain Benteen.

As the buoyant colonel rejoined his regiment and steered it up the Rosebud, 300 miles away a lonely woman was at her desk penning a last letter to the only man she had ever loved.

My own darling —I dreamed of you as I knew I should.… Oh, Autie how I feel about your going away so long without our hearing… Your safety is ever in my mind. My thoughts, my dreams, my prayers, are all for you. God bless and keep my darling. Ever your own Libbie.

***

Despite his normally unshakable spirit and the joy surrounding the onset, by the end of the first day's ride a gloom had settled over George Custer. The feeling, in turn, filtered down to the entire command. Again, Lieutenant Godfrey:

About sunset 'officer's call' was sounded, and we assembled at General Custer's bivouac and squatted in groups about the General's bed. It was not a cheerful assemblage; everybody seemed to be in a serious mood, and the little conversation carried on, before all had arrived, was in undertones. When all had assembled, the General said that until further orders, trumpet calls would not be sounded except in an emergency; the marches would begin at 5 a.m. sharp; the troop commanders were all experienced officers, and knew well enough what to do.… He took particular pain to impress upon the officers his reliance upon their judgment, discretion, and loyalty…All officers were requested to make to him any suggestions they thought fit.

This 'talk' of his…was considered at the time as something extraordinary for General Custer, for it was not his habit to unbosom himself to his officers.… [T]here was an indefinable something that was not Custer. His manner and tone, usually brusque and aggressive, or somewhat curt, was on this occasion conciliating and subdued. There was something akin to an appeal, as if depressed, that made a deep impression on all present. We compared watches to get the official time, and separated to attend to our various duties.

Lieutenants [Donald] McIntosh, [George] Wallace and myself walked to our bivouac, for some distance in silence, when Wallace remarked: 'Godfrey, I believe General Custer is going to be killed.'

'Why, Wallace?' I replied, 'What makes you think so?' 'Because,' said he, 'I have never heard Custer talk in that way before.'

After a word with his men and a check of the animals, Godfrey entered the camp of the Indian scouts.

'Mitch' Bouyer, Bloody Knife, Half-Yellow-Face, and others were having a 'talk.' I observed them for a few minutes, when Bouyer turned toward me…and said, 'Have you ever fought against these Sioux?' 'Yes,' I replied. Then he asked, 'Well, how many do you expect to find?' I answered, 'It is said we may find between one thousand and fifteen hundred.' 'Well, do you think we can whip that many?' 'Oh, yes, I guess so.' After he had interpreted our conversation, he said to me with a good deal of emphasis, 'Well, I can tell you we are going to have a damned big fight.'

Godfrey continues:

At five o'clock sharp, on the morning of the 23rd, General Custer mounted and started up the Rosebud, followed by two sergeants, one carrying the regimental standard, and the other his personal or headquarters flag… This was the signal for the command to mount and take up the march. Eight miles out we came to the first of the Indian camping-places. It certainly indicated a large

village and numerous population… During the day we passed through three of these camping-places and made halts at each one. Everybody was busy studying the age of the pony droppings and tracks and lodge trails, and endeavoring to determine the number of lodges. These points were all-absorbing topics of conversation. We went into camp about five o'clock, having marched about thirty-three miles.

June 24th we passed a great many camping places, all appearing to be of nearly the same strength… We passed through one much larger than any of the others. The grass for a considerable distance around it had been cropped close, indicating that large herds had been grazed there. The frame of a large 'Sun-Dance' lodge was standing, and in it we found the scalp of a white man.… The command halted here and the 'officers' call' was sounded. Upon assembling we were informed that our Crow scouts… had discovered fresh signs, the tracks of three or four ponies and one Indian on

foot. At this point a stiff southerly breeze was blowing; as we were about to separate, the General's headquarters' flag was blown down, falling toward our rear. Being near the flag I picked it up and stuck the staff in the ground, but it again fell to the rear… Lieutenant Wallace… had observed [this], and regarded the fact of it falling to the rear as a bad omen, and felt sure we would suffer a defeat.

The march during the day was tedious. We made many long halts, so as not to get ahead of the scouts, who seemed to be doing their work thoroughly.… The valley was heavily marked with lodge-pole trails and pony tracks, showing that immense herds of ponies had been driven over it. About sundown we went into camp under the cover of a bluff, so as to hide the command as much as possible. We had marched about twenty-eight miles.

"[W]e camped ... on abandoned Indian camp," a Ree scout recalled, "and found a stone with two bulls drawn on it. On one bull was drawn a bullet and on the other a lance. The two bulls were charging toward each other.

Custer asked Bloody Knife to translate it and Bloody Knife said it meant a hard battle would occur if an enemy came that way."

Bloody Knife (left) and George Custer

As the scouts gathered that evening to eat, they discussed the track discovered that day, "a trail," remarked young Billy Jackson, "all of three hundred yards wide."

All agreed that at least fifteen hundred lodges of the enemy had made that broad trail. Said Bloody Knife: 'My friends, this big trail proves what we heard, that the… Sioux have left their agencies to join Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse; but I am sure that even this trail does not account for all that have left their agencies. There surely are other trails of them; and trails, too, of Cheyennes and Arapahoes.… It is as I have told Long Hair: this gathering of the enemy tribes is too many for us. But he will not believe me. He is bound to lead us against them. They are found some Indians around it, stuffing the contents into their clothing. None could now doubt that the enemy had all along kept watch of our advance. With a grim laugh, Charlie Reynolds said to me: 'I knew well enough that they had scouts ahead of us, but I didn't think that others would be trailing along to pick up stuff dropped by our careless packers.'

not far away; just over this ridge, they are all encamped and waiting for us. Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull are not men without sense; they have their scouts out, and some of them surely have their eyes upon us. Well, tomorrow we are going to have a big fight, a losing fight. Myself, I know what is to happen to me; my sacred helper has given me warning that I am not to see the set of to-morrow's sun.'

Sad words, those. They chilled us. I saw Charlie Reynolds nod agreement to them, and was chilled again when he said in a low voice: 'I feel as he does: tomorrow will be the end for me, too. Anyone who wants my little outfit of stuff… can have it right now.' He opened it, began passing out tobacco; a sewing-kit; several shirts and so on. Many refused the presents; those who accepted them did so with evident reluctance.

We had little appetite for our coffee and hardtack, and the meat that we were broiling.

Later, with the camp wrapped in sleep, Custer ordered all officers to his tent. Edward Godfrey:

So we gave up our much-needed rest and groped our way through horse herds, over sleeping men, and through thickets of bushes trying to find headquarters. No one could tell us, and as all fires and lights were out we could not keep our bearings. We finally espied a solitary candlelight, toward which we traveled and found most of the officers assembled at the General's bivouac. The General said that the trail led over the divide to the Little Big Horn; the march would be taken up at once, as he was anxious to get as near the divide as possible before daylight.

After a dusty ride of ten miles, the column halted at 2 a.m. on Sunday, June 25, to await morning light. Billy Jackson:

At dawn… [w]hile we were eating, several of the packers rode swiftly up through the command to General Custer.… [W]e soon learned that they had lost a box of hardtack off one of the mules, and, on going back, had

Convinced at last that we could not possibly surprise the enemy, General Custer ordered a quick advance, with the scouts and himself in the lead. We had not gone far when Bloody Knife and his two Rees joined us, and reported that on the other side of the ridge they had found the day-old trail of many more of the enemy going toward the valley of the Little Bighorn.

Again, Lieutenant Godfrey:

We… marched uninterruptedly until 10:30 a.m. when we halted in a ravine and were ordered to preserve quiet, keep concealed, and not do anything that would be likely to reveal our presence to the enemy.… Our officers had generally collected in groups and discussed the situation. Some sought solitude and sleep, or meditation. The Ree scouts… were together and their 'medicine man' was anointing them and invoking the Great Spirit to protect them from the Sioux.

Meanwhile, Custer and several scouts had climbed to a high point in hope of gaining a glimpse of the village. From such a great distance nothing was definite but above the Little Bighorn Valley, an ominous haze stretched for miles. Soon the colonel returned to his command.

"At 12m … we crossed the divide between the Rosebud and the Little Big Horn," Lieutenant Wallace remembered. "From the divide could be seen the valley… and about 15 or 20 miles to the northwest could be seen a light blue cloud, and to the practiced eyes showed that our game was near." Returning to Billy Jackson:

On we went over the divide. We soon met [Mitch Bouyer] and his two Crows. They were excited, and Bruyer [sic] said to Custer: 'General, we have discovered the camp, down there on the Little Horn. It is a big one! Too big for you to tackle! Why, there are thousands and thousands of Sioux and Cheyennes down there.'

For a moment the general stared at him, angrily, I thought, and then sternly replied: "I shall attack them! If you are afraid, Bruyer.…"

'I guess I can go wherever you do,' Bruyer quickly answered; and at that, the general turned back to the command, we following him. He had the bugler sound the officers' call… and Custer gave his orders for the attack upon the camp. None of the scouts had been far in the lead, and they all came in.… [W]e were a gathering of solemn faces. Speaking in English, and the sign language, too, so that all would understand, Bruyer described the enemy camp. It was, he said, all of three miles long, and made up of hundreds and hundreds of lodges. Above it and below and west of it were thousands and thousands of horses that were being close-herded. With his few riders, Long Hair had decided to attack the camp, and we were going to have a terrible fight; we should all take courage, fight hard, make our every shot a killer. He finished, and none spoke. But after a minute or two, Bloody Knife looked up and signed to [the] Sun: 'I shall not see you go down behind the mountains tonight.'

Detaching a battalion under Captain Benteen to veer left and prevent the Sioux from escaping up the river, Custer led the rest down toward the Little Bighorn. When two miles from the valley, Major Reno, with more than 100 troopers and scouts, was to push ahead, ford the river, and strike the village from the south. With the remainder of the regiment, roughly 230 men, Custer would hug the bluffs and charge the camp from the north.

As Custer moved off to the right, Reno's small force moved rapidly down a draw toward the river. "[W]e could see a big dust over the valley of the Little Bighorn, there being a north wind," said interpreter Fred Girard, "and this gave the impression that the Indians were fleeing north." Another man riding with Reno was Sergeant John Ryan.

[We] started down [to] the valley, first on a trot, and then at a gallop, marching in columns of twos. Lieutenant [Charles] Varnum, a very brave young officer in command of the scouts, rode ahead of Reno's battalion. He swung his hat around in the air, and sung out to the men, 'Thirty days' furlough to the man who gets the first scalp.…'

We arrived at the bank of the Little Big Horn river and waded to the other side, and here there was a very strong current, and there was quick-sand about three feet deep. On the other side of the river we made a short halt, dismounted, tightened our saddle girths, and then swung into our saddles.… We were then in the valley…and facing downstream. We started down on a trot and then on a slow gallop.… We advanced.… [toward] a heavy piece of timber. Before we arrived at the timber, there was one shot fired away ahead of us.… That was the first shot that I heard.

In a few moments Sioux began to race up the valley. "Our horses were scenting danger," noted Private William Slaper, "and several … became unmanageable and started straight for the open among the Indians, carrying their helpless riders with them."

"When we got to the timber we rode down an embankment and … dismounted in haste," Sergeant Ryan continued, "number four of each set of four holding the horses. We came up onto higher ground … facing down stream in the direction of the Indian camp. This was our first view of the Indian camp."

Also in the woods with Reno was Billy Jackson.

Within two minutes from the time that we left our horses, and climbed up the bank from them, we had a line of defense in the brush and out across toward the west bluff of the valley. Then came the rush of the enemy, all of five hundred well-mounted riders … eager to get at us. Their shots, their war-cries, the thunder of their horses' feet were deafening.

It was the intention of the enemy to charge straight through the center of our line, but, by the time they had come within fifty yards, we had shot so many of them that they swung out and went streaming past the outer end of our line, lying low upon their horses and firing rapidly. The dust that their swift charge raised … almost choked us: it drifted upon us like a thick fog, and obscured the sun.… Several hundred of the enemy went thundering past that outer end of our line, and, swinging in, began [an] attack upon our rear, and more and more arrivals from the camp swarmed in front of us.

The pressure was too great. The scattered men to the west, terrified by the screaming Indians and the sight of hundreds more streaming in, wavered, then ran. Others along the line also bolted; in a few moments, all had fled "pell mell" back to the trees.

"I … soon saw that I was being drawn into some trap," Reno said. "I could not see Custer or any other support, and at the same time the very earth seemed to grow Indians. They were running toward me in swarms and from all directions. I saw I must defend myself and give up the attack. … This I did." Remembered Fred Girard:

As Major Reno left the line and passed into the timber, I saw him put a bottle of whisky to his mouth and drink the whole contents. … In the timber all was confusion. … The Sioux had closed in and were firing into the timber more or less at random from the south and the northwest. … Reno, however, seeing no support from the rear, lost his head … and suddenly decided to run the gauntlet of the Sioux.

Sergeant John Ryan:

As we mounted I looked to the rear in the direction of the river and saw the Indians completing the circle, riding through the brush and lying flat on their ponies.… Just at that moment one of those Indians fired and Private George Lorentz … was shot, the bullet striking him in the back of his neck and coming out of his mouth. He fell forward on his saddle and dropped to the ground. Just at that moment the Indians fired into us from all sides.

Returning to Billy Jackson:

I saw Major Reno, hatless, a handkerchief tied around his head, getting up on his plunging horse. Waving his six-shooter, he shouted something that I couldn't hear, and led swiftly off, up out of the depression that we were in. We all swarmed after him, and headed back up the way that we had come, our intention being to recross the river and get up onto the bluffs, where we could make a stand. By this time hundreds more of the enemy had come up from the camp, and all together they swarmed in on us and a handto-hand fight with them began. I saw numbers of our men dropping from their horses, saw horses falling, heard their awful neighs of fright and pain. Close ahead of me, Bloody Knife, and then Charlie Reynolds, went down.

With much of his head blown away, Bloody Knife had indeed fulfilled his vision. Amid the smoke and dust, however, the quiet man called "Lonesome" regained his feet. "I saw Charlie…dismounted and wounded with pistol standing still and showing fight," one witness recalled as he and the others flew by. Soon, Reynolds was engulfed by the howling storm and vanished.

Like everyone else, Billy Jackson was lashing his horse for safety.

Marcus Reno

A big heavy-set Indian brushed up against me, tried to pull me out of the saddle, and I shot him. Then, right in front, a soldier's horse was shot from under him, and as I came up, he grasped my right stirrup and ran beside me. I had to check my horse so that he could keep up, and so began to lag behind. Numbers of Indians were passing on both sides of us, eager to get at the main body of the retreat. At last one of the passing Indians made a close shot at the soldier and killed him, and as I gave my horse loose rein, [Fred] Girard came up on my left, and we rode on side by side. Ahead, there was now a solid body of Indians between us and the retreating, hard-pressed soldiers, and Girard shouted to me: 'We can't go through them! Let's turn back!'

[W]e finally got into thick, high brush, dismounted and tied our horses. Just then we saw someone coming toward us, and were about to fire at him when we discovered that he was Lieutenant [Charles] DeRudio. He told us that his horse

had run away from him. As we stood there, listening to the heavy firing up on the river, we were joined by [Private] Thomas O'Neil…also horseless.

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In the meantime, among the bluffs, the battalion under Benteen was approaching the valley. Lieutenant Edward Godfrey rode with it.

We now heard firing, first straggling shots, and as we advanced, the engagements became more and more pronounced and appeared to be coming toward us. The column took the gallop with pistols drawn, expecting to meet the enemy which we thought Custer was driving before him. … We were forming in line to meet our supposed enemy, when we came in full view of the valley of the Little Big Horn. The valley was full of horsemen riding to and fro in clouds of dust and smoke, for the grass had been fired by the Indians to drive the troops out and cover their own movements.

"I saw an immense number of Indians on the plain … charging down on some dismounted men of Reno's command," added a stunned Frederick Benteen. "[T]he balance of R's command were mounted and flying off for dear life to the bluffs on the same side of the river I was."

One of those "flying for dear life" was Private William Morris.

I made for the river … and jumped my horse off the bank—which was at least ten feet high—landing in the center of the river which proved to be deep. I thought I was a goner, but we … crossed to the opposite side and made for the cut or pony trail which led up to the bluff. When I arrived there, Lieutenant [Benjamin] Hodgson … was in the river grabbing for a trooper's stirrup, who refused to help him. I then saw that the water was crimson around his legs and thighs.… I rode up … and Hodgson reached out and said to me: 'For God's sake, don't leave me here, I am shot through both legs.' I said: 'All right, grab hold.' I gave him my right stirrup which he grabbed with both hands, and I grabbed him by the collar.… I had a firm grip on him and he was safe until the second plunge of the horse which took us halfway up the cut. On the third plunge he let go, and all his weight fell upon me and almost pulled me apart. He was probably hit again. At any rate, he fell to the ground.

"The Indians …were now riding into the stream," said one soldier, "shooting into the ranks of the stampeding troopers and actually pulling many of them from their horses right there in the river." Another trooper struggling through the churning red current was Henry Petring.

[W]hen part way across [I] saw four or five Indians on the bank ahead of me and very near. One Indian … drew up his gun as if to fire, and I … drew up my carbine without taking aim and fired, and both the pony and the Indian dropped. Then I … jumped down off my horse and started downstream as fast as I could in water waist deep and deeper. I did not look back until I had gone some little distance, and when I did I saw two of the Indians carrying off the one I had shot, and the pony still lay there as if dead. I was then several hundred yards away and back on the same side of the river from which I had started to cross. I immediately went under a stump and…wondered if, after all, the best thing I could do would not be to shoot myself.

Cut off in front and rear, many, like Private Petring, were left to their fate. According to witnesses:

Some distance from the timber, Lieutenant McIntosh was trying to make his way. He was singled out by himself, and he was trying to urge his horse along but he was not succeeding well. His lariat was dragging, which seemed to bother his horse. McIntosh was surrounded by 20 or 30 Indians who were circling about him, apparently determined to get him. … [H]e was overtaken, pulled from his horse and plugged with pistol shots while lying at the feet of his murderers.

Once across the river, the terror-stricken survivors found only a narrow cut leading up the bluffs, barely wide enough for a single rider. As the soldiers scrambled up, the Indians shot them down. William Morris:

I got off … and adjusted my saddle girth, jumped on again and pushed on. Two-thirds of the way up the bluff I overtook Privates Dave Gordon and Bill Meyer. … I said to them: 'That was pretty hot down there'…. The next second all three of us were hit … Bill was hit in the eye, and Dave Gordon was shot through the neck, cutting his windpipe. All three horses were hit, and I was shot through the left breast.

"After we gained the bluffs," Sergeant Ryan noted, "we could look back upon the plains where the Indians were, and could see them stripping and scalping our men, and mutilating their bodies in a horrible manner."

"Hordes of squaws and old, gray-haired Indians were roaming over the battlefield, howling like mad," another witness recalled. "The squaws had stone mallets and mashed in the skulls of the dead and wounded."

Soon after the breathless troopers reached the top of the bluffs, Benteen's battalion arrived. "For God's sake, Benteen," gasped Major Reno, "halt your command and help me. I've lost half my men." Benteen was none too soon. "[T]he Indians commenced to swarm around us like devils," Lieutenant Frank Gibson remembered, "thousands of them, all with modern rifles, while we were using old carbines." One who arrived with Benteen was Edward Godfrey.

Benteen's battalion was ordered to dismount and deploy as skirmishers on the edge of the bluffs overlooking the valley. Very soon after this the Indians withdrew from the attack. Lieutenant [Luther] Hare came to where I was standing and, grasping my hand heartily, said with a good deal of emphasis: 'We've had a big fight in the bottom, got whipped, and I am glad to see you'…. I had already suspected that something was wrong, but was not quite prepared for such startling information.…

A number of officers collected on the edge of the bluff overlooking the valley and were discussing the situation. At this time there were a large number of horsemen, Indians, in the valley. Suddenly they all started down the valley, and in a few minutes scarcely a horseman was to be seen. Heavy firing was heard down the river. During this time the questions were being asked: 'What's the matter with Custer, that he don't send word what we shall do?' … thus showing some uneasiness, but still no one seemed to show great anxiety, nor do I know that anyone felt any serious apprehension but that Custer could and would take care of himself. Some of Reno's men had seen Custer's headquarters party, including Custer himself, on the bluffs about the time the Indians began to develop in Reno's front. This party was heard to cheer, and seen to wave their hats as if to give encouragement, and then they disappeared behind the hills.…

During a long time after the junction of Reno and Benteen we heard firing down the river in the direction of Custer's command. We were satisfied that Custer was fighting the Indians somewhere, and the conviction was expressed that 'our command ought to be doing something or Custer would be after Reno with a sharp stick.' We heard two distinct

volleys which excited some surprise, and … brought out the remark from someone that ‘Custer was giving it to them for all he is worth’…. About five o’clock the command moved down toward Custer’s supposed whereabouts, intending to join him. The advance went as far as the high bluffs…. The air was full of dust. We could see stationary groups of horsemen, and individual horsemen moving about. From their grouping and the manner in which they sat their horses we knew they were Indians.

"We saw a good many … galloping up and down and firing at objects on the ground," added Lieutenant Edgerly. Returning to Godfrey:

Looking toward Custer’s field, on a hill two miles away, we saw a large assemblage. At first our command did not appear to attract their attention, although there was some commotion observable among those near to our position. We heard occasional shots, most of which seemed to be a great distance off, beyond the large groups on the hill. While watching this group, the conclusion was arrived at that Custer had been repulsed, and the firing we heard was the parting shots of the rear guard. The firing ceased, the groups dispersed, clouds of dust arose from all parts of the field, and the horsemen converged toward our position. … The Indians almost immediately followed [us] to the top of the bluff, and commenced firing into the retreating troops, killing one man, wounding others and several horses. They then started down the hillside in pursuit. I at once made up my mind that such a retreat and close pursuit would throw the whole command into confusion, and, perhaps, prove disastrous. I dismounted my men to fight on foot, deploying as rapidly as possible.

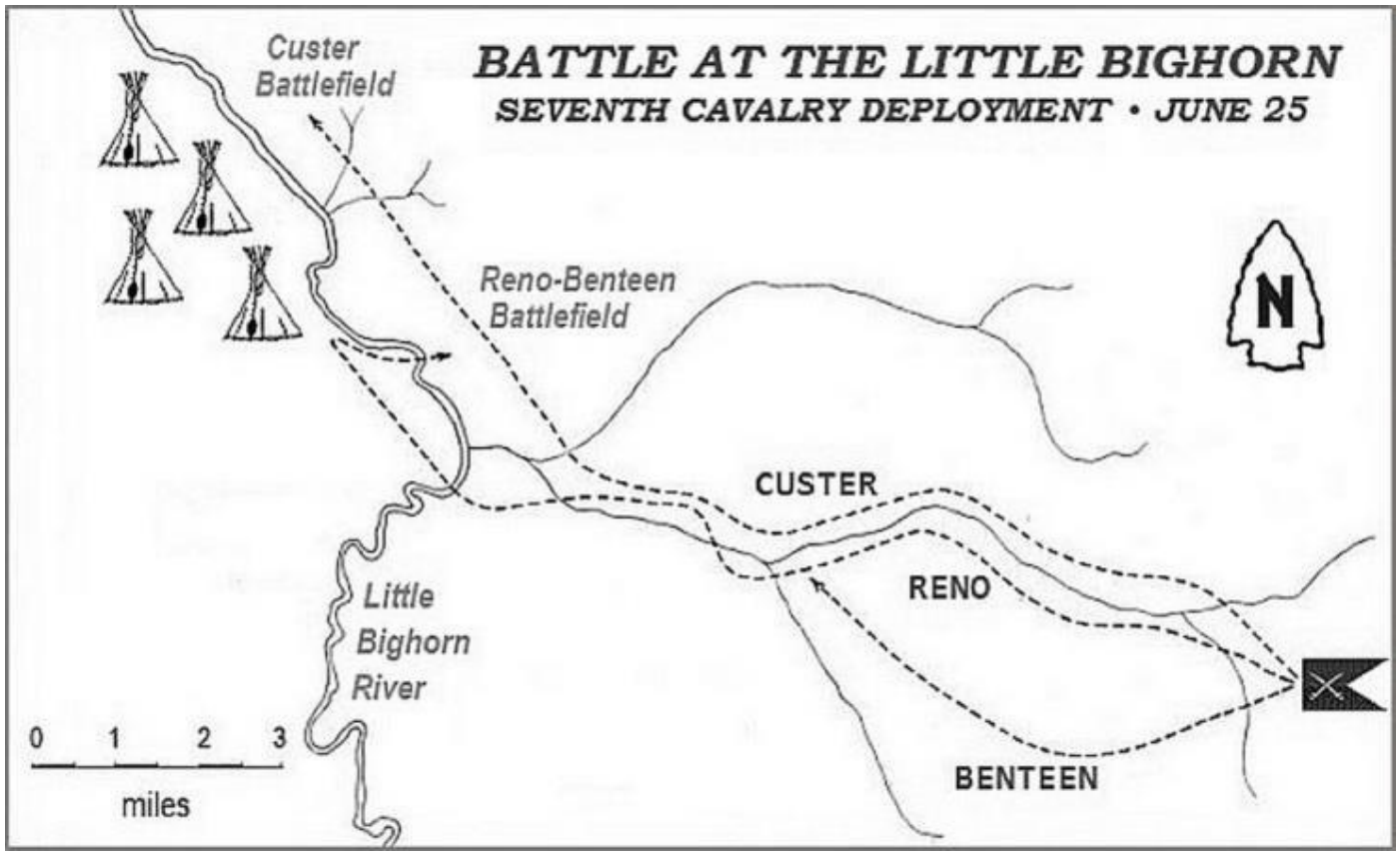
Our fire in a short time compelled the Indians to halt and take cover, but before this was accomplished a second order came for me to fall back as quickly as possible to the main command. Having checked the pursuit we began our retreat, slowly at first, but kept up our firing. After proceeding some distance the men began to group together, and to move a little faster and faster, and our fire slackened. This was pretty good evidence that they were getting demoralized. The Indians were being heavily reinforced and began to come from their cover, but kept up a heavy fire. I halted the line, made the men take their intervals, and again drove the Indians to cover; then once more began the retreat. The firing of the Indians was heavy. The bullets struck the ground all about us; but the "ping-ping" of the bullets overhead seemed to have a more terrifying influence than the "swish thud" of the bullets that struck the ground immediately about us. When we got to the ridge in front of Reno’s position I observed some Indians making all haste to get possession of a hill to the right. I could see the rest of the command, and I knew that that hill would command Reno’s position.… It was now about seven o’clock.

"We dismounted in haste," John Ryan recounted, "putting the wounded in a low depression on the bluffs and put packs from the mules around them to shelter them from the fire of the Indians. We then formed a circle of our pack mules and horses, forming a skirmish line all around the hole, and then lay down and waited for the Indians." The sergeant continued:

We had been in this position but a short time when they advanced in great numbers from the direction in which we came. They made several charges upon us and we repulsed them every time. Finally they surrounded us. Soon the firing became general all along the line, very rapid and at close range. The company on the right of my company had a number of men killed in a few minutes. There was a ridge on the right … and one Indian in particular … [was] a good shot. While we were lying in this line he fired a shot and killed the fourth man on my right. Soon afterward he fired again and shot the third man. His third shot wounded the man on my right, who jumped back from the line, and down among the wounded. I thought my turn was coming next. I jumped up, with Captain [Thomas] French, and some half a dozen members of my company, and, instead of firing straight to the front, as we had been doing up to the time of this incident, we wheeled to our right and put in a deadly volley, and I think we put an end to that Indian, as there were no more men killed at that particular spot.

"Everybody … lay down and spread himself out as thin as possible," recalled Lieutenant Godfrey. "After lying there a few minutes I was horrified to find myself wondering if a small sagebrush, about as thick as my finger, would turn a bullet."

For the remainder of the day the Sioux and Cheyenne snipers kept the soldiers pinned down. By dusk, however, the firing ceased and the relieved whites began to stir. "Of course, everybody was wondering about Custer—why he did not communicate by courier or signal," Godfrey continued. "But the general opinion seemed to prevail that he had been defeated and driven down the river, where he would probably join General Terry, and with whom he



would return to our relief. Quite frequently, too, the question, 'What's the matter with Custer?' would evoke an impatient reply."

"We felt terribly alone on that dangerous hilltop," recalled Private Windolph. "We were a million miles from nowhere. And death was all around us."

As Edward Godfrey revealed, such forlorn feelings coupled with the strain of the past several hours had a devastating effect on the besieged.

Soon after all firing had ceased the wildest confusion prevailed. Men imagined they could see a column of troops over on the hills or ridges, that they could hear the tramp of the horses, the command of officers or even the trumpet-calls.…

[S]hots were fired by some of our men, and familiar trumpet-calls were sounded by our trumpeter immediately after, to let the supposed marching column know that we were friends. Every favorable expression or opinion was received with credulity, and then ratified with a cheer. Somebody suggested that General Crook might be coming, so someone… mounted a horse, and galloping along the line yelled: 'Don't be discouraged, boys, Crook is coming.' But they gradually realized that the muchwished-for reinforcements were but the phantasma of their imaginations.

That evening, Sergeant Ryan remembered, "[w]e went to work with what tools we had, consisting of two spades, our knives and tin cups, and, in fact, we used pieces of hard tack boxes for spades, and commenced throwing up temporary works. We also formed breastworks from boxes of hard bread, sacks of bacon, sacks of corn and oats, blankets, and in fact everything that we could get hold of." Though the fighting had mercifully ceased, the nightmare had not. Godfrey:

The long twilight was prolonged by numerous bonfires, located throughout their village. The long shadows of the hills and the refracted light gave a supernatural aspect to the surrounding country.… Their camp was a veritable pandemonium. All night long they continued their frantic revels: beating tom-toms, dancing, whooping, yelling with demoniacal screams, and discharging firearms. We knew they were having a scalp dance.

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Terrible as the situation seemed to those atop the bluffs, it was far worse for the men still trapped below. After cowering all day in the brush along the river and after witnessing Indians skin alive their wounded comrades, one group of four decided at dark to make their break. Billy Jackson:

Girard and I were to ride our horses, the others walking close at our side. Then, if we were discovered, DeRudio and O'Neil were to drop down flat upon the ground, and we were to ride away, drawing the enemy after us. We were no sooner out of the brush than we began to pass the bodies of the men and horses that had been killed along the line of Reno's retreat. The men had all been stripped of their clothing, and were … badly cut up.…

We went on to the river, coming to a halt at the edge of a bank dropping straight down to the water; on the other side, a high, black, and very steep bank faced us.… O'Neil jumped in to ascertain the depth, went in almost to his neck and would have been carried downstream had he not seized some overhanging brush and drawn himself to footing closer in. He filled his hat with water and passed it up to DeRudio, who handed it to me. I drank every drop it contained and wanted more. We went on up the shore, looking for a place to cross.… Ahead of us was black darkness, heavy silence. As we went on, our hearts became more and more heavy; we feared that all of the troops had been killed. We came to a place where the river was rippling and murmuring, as water does over a shallow stony bed. … 'Take hold of my horse's tail, I will lead in,' Girard replied. In we went, slowly, feeling our way. Nowhere across was the water up to our horses'

knees!

In the words of Lieutenant DeRudio:

[W]e forded the stream but found it was at a bend and that we would have to ford it again. When we recrossed the river, we ran full into a band of eight savages. The two mounted men ran for their lives, the soldier and myself jumped

into the bushes near us. I cocked my revolver and in a kneeling position was ready to fire at the savages if they should approach me. They evidently thought, from the precipitate retreat of the two mounted men, that all of us had decamped; and began to talk among themselves.… We then saw that all the fords were well guarded by the savages, and it would be very dangerous to attempt to cross any part of the river.

Though these four were forced to hunt new holes, others, including Private Petring, somehow managed to rejoin their comrades on the hill. Sergeant Ryan:

During the night ammunition and the rations reached us where we were entrenched in the lines, but we suffered severely from lack of water. Although the river was only three or four hundred yards away, we were unable to get any water, as the Indians held the approach to it. During the night several men made attempts to get water, but they were killed or driven back.

About the middle of the night we heard a trumpet call, and the men commenced to cheer, thinking it was Custer's men who were coming to our assistance. Major Reno ordered one of our trumpeters to sound a call, but it was not repeated, so we made up our minds that it was a decoy on the part of the Indians to get us out of our works.

The next morning, being the 26th, two shots were fired just before daylight by the Indians, in rapid succession.… This began the engagement of another day. In a few moments the battle raged in earnest, the Indians advancing in large numbers and trying to cut through.

After driving back the attackers, both sides engaged in heavy firing. "Of course it was their policy to draw our fire as much as possible to exhaust our ammunition," Godfrey noted. "The Indians amused themselves by standing erect, in full view for an instant, then dropping down again before a bullet could reach them.… Then they resorted to the old ruse of raising a hat and blouse, or a blanket, on a stick to draw our fire."

Whatever contempt a soldier may have had for Indian marksmanship before June 26 quickly dissolved after that day. Charles Windolph:

My buddy … was lying alongside of me.… Together we had scooped out a wide, shallow trench and we piled up the dirt to make a little breastwork in front of us. It was plumb light now, and the Indian sharpshooters on the knob of the hill south of us and perhaps a thousand yards away, were taking pot shots at us. Jones said something about taking off his overcoat, and he started to roll on his side so that he could get his arms and shoulders out without exposing himself to fire. Suddenly I heard him cry out. He had been shot straight through the heart.

After a comrade next to him received a mortal stomach wound, Jacob Adams saw another trooper nearby double up when a "ball struck him in the breast … and came out of his back just above the hip." Regarding a civilian packer, another soldier said: "He was aiming a carbine over a breastwork about 3 ft. high, and after he had been observed in this position about 20 min., someone made [a] remark that 'something must be wrong with the packer.' Upon going up he was found stone dead, having been hit in the temple and killed so quick that he did not move from [the] position [of] sighting his gun."

Frederick Benteen

As the fighting intensified and the circle tightened, one man boldly took control. "Benteen was on his feet all day," remembered Private George Glenn, "and, it being hot, his shirt tail worked out of his pants and hung down, and he went around that way encouraging the men. He would say 'Men, this is a groundhog case; it is live or die with us. We must fight it out with them.'"

"The bullets were flying very fast and I don't see why ... Benteen was not riddled," added an amazed Lieutenant Edgerly.

"He was perfectly cool," Godfrey recalled. "There was a smile on his face.… I shouted at him that he better come away from the place where he was, that there was a real danger of him being shot. He replied something to the effect that the bullet had not been molded yet that would shoot him."

"Lieutenant Gibson was trying to get out of sight in a pit too shallow and was acting so cowardly that he was in the way of men passing back and forth," revealed Private Glenn. "Benteen got ashamed of him and told the men to run over him if he persisted in lying there."

"[A]n Indian had shot one of Gibson's men," Godfrey continued, "then rushed up and touched the body with his 'coup-stick,' and started back to cover, but he was killed."

This boldness determined Benteen to make a charge.… The firing almost ceased for a while, and then it recommenced with greater fury.… Benteen came back to where Reno was, and said if something was not done pretty soon the Indians would run into our lines. Waiting a short time, and no action being taken on his suggestion, he said rather impatiently: 'you've got to do something here on the north side pretty quick; this won't do, you must drive them back.' Reno then directed us to get ready for a charge, and told Benteen to give the word. Benteen called out, 'All ready now, men. Now's the time. Give them hell. Hip, hip, here we go!' And away we went with a hurrah, every man … but one, who lay in his pit crying like a child. The Indians fired more rapidly than before from their whole line. Our men left the pits with their carbines loaded, and they began firing without orders soon after we started. A large body of Indians had assembled at the foot of one of the hills on the north intending probably to make a charge, as Benteen had divined, but they broke as soon as our line started.

"[T]o say that 'twas a surprise to them, is mild form," Benteen laughed, "for they somersaulted and vaulted as so many trained acrobats, having no order in getting down those ravines, but quickly getting!" Returning to Godfrey:

When we had advanced 70 to 100 yards, Reno called out 'Get back, men, back,' and back the whole line came. A most singular fact of this sortie was that not a man who had advanced with the lines was hit; but directly after everyone had gotten into the pits again, the one man who did not go out was shot in the head and killed instantly. The poor fellow had a premonition that he would be killed, and had so told one of his comrades.

Driven to delirium by heat, thirst, and the crushing pressure, some soldiers snapped. One man "went insane," a witness said, "and … we had to tie him fast." Private Peter Thompson recorded the fate of another crazed comrade.

His name was Pat Golden, a young man of striking appearance, with dark hair, black mustache, tall, straight as an arrow and nimble as a cat.… [S]hooting from the shelter of a rifle pit was not suitable to him, and to get a better view of the enemy he sprang out of the pit and commenced to fire at anything that appeared to him like an Indian. He was urged by his comrades to come under cover as it was too dangerous to expose himself that way. Heedless of the danger, he held his position amid a shower of lead, both a challenge and a target to the fire of the Indians. It was not long before he was hit by a ball, but he still kept his place. Again he was struck but he still kept his feet, firing when the opportunity presented itself, apparently paying no attention to the entreaties of his comrades to come under shelter. He called out as another bullet struck him, 'Boys, that is number three, but I'm still here. Number four,' he shouted as another bullet struck him, and he still kept his feet and fired his gun. Every man of his company admired his pluck, but they could not help but see that he was throwing his life away. Finally, a ball went crashing through his brain and his lifeless body rolled into a rifle pit which became his grave.

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As the morning wore on, the cry for water increased, especially among the wounded. "Some of the enlisted men would propose that some … should volunteer to get to the river for this purpose," Stanislas Roy recounted. "This talk went around, and finally the officers said if any of the men wanted to volunteer they might do so." Eventually, a dozen men, including Corporal Roy, crawled from the line.

In going down … we had to run across an open space about 100 yards wide to get to [the] head of [the] ravine. From here to [the] river we were concealed from [the] Sioux. We got down to [the] mouth of [the] ravine and could see Indians in [the] brush on [the] opposite bank … but we did not want to shoot, to bring an engagement [on].… I was [the] fifth man to dash for water. … [W]e numbered ourselves off and said that as each man's name was called off he could go or not as he would choose. The first man, whose name I do not remember, came back with a kettle full and we all took a drink, the first in 36 hours. I think Wilber was fourth, and he was wounded. After Madden was hit, he crawled back and we gave him water and nursed him and there was then an intermission of about one-half hour before anyone went again. Altogether we were there in the ravine about an hour getting water. We would rush and fill the kettle from the river and then fill canteens from the kettles.

In about one and one-half hours after starting we got back to the top of [the] hill.

Heroic as the act had been, the water was but a fraction of what was needed and most was reserved for the wounded. Even then, Roy admitted, "there was not enough to give them all they craved for.'"

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As the heat of the day approached, the stench of decomposition became hideous. "My horse was killed, and he was one of the dead horses piled up on [the] line," said scout George Herendeen. "I lay behind him … and he was bloated up with gas, and two or three times when the body was struck, I could hear the hiss of escaping gas."

The sniping along the bluffs continued until about 3 p.m., when it abruptly abated. A relieved, yet perplexed, Edward Godfrey:

Late in the afternoon we saw a few horsemen in the bottom apparently to observe us, and then fire was set to the grass in the valley. About 7 p.m. we saw emerge from behind this screen of smoke an immense moving mass crossing the plateau, going toward the Big Horn Mountains. This moving mass was distant about five or six miles, but looked much nearer, and almost directly between us and the setting sun, now darkened by the smoke and dust ladened atmosphere. … A fervent 'Thank God' that they had at last given up the contest was soon followed by grave doubts as to their motive for moving. Perhaps Custer had met Terry, and was coming to our relief; perhaps they were short of ammunition and were moving their village to a safe distance before making a final desperate effort to overwhelm us; perhaps it was only a ruse to get us on the move and then clean us out, were the conjectures.

From their coverts along the river, Billy Jackson and Fred Girard also watched the exodus. "The great horde of warriors and ponies and squaws and children passed so near to us," Girard recalled, "that we could plainly see wounded warriors on travois and dead warriors thrown across and tied to the backs of horses. Above all the noise and rattle and the hum of voices and cries of children we could hear the … chanting of the squaws."

"They were happy, they were singing victory songs," noted a confused Billy Jackson. "I could not understand that. Where was victory for them when the fight was not ended?"

Grateful for the Indians' departure, even if temporary, the soldiers atop the hill moved quickly to improve their lot. "The stench from the dead men and horses was now exceedingly offensive, and it was decided to take up a new position nearer the river," Godfrey explained. "[T]he men were put to work digging pits with the expectation of a renewal of the attack. Our loss on the hill had been eighteen killed and fifty-two wounded."

That night, volunteers brought up more water for the thirst-crazed men. To everyone's surprise, Billy Jackson and his three companions, who had been cowering amid thousands of Indians for nearly two days, finally slipped across the line to safety. The following morning, with no enemy in sight, the troopers felt bold enough to lead the surviving mounts down the hill. "It was a pitiful sight," recalled one soldier, "to see the poor animals plunge their heads in the water up to their eyes and drink." Sergeant John Ryan:

[A]t daylight we could look from the bluffs over the timber to where the Indian camp was, and we saw that it was deserted, with the exception of the lodge poles, which remained standing. On the other side, a long way off from the Indian camp, we noticed a large cloud of dust arising, and a body of either Indians or troops coming towards the Indian camp, but at the time we could not distinguish which they were. Some of the officers turned their field glasses on, and thought they were troops. Reno immediately dispatched a couple of his scouts.

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First word of the June 25 fight had reached Alfred Terry when Crow scouts from Custer's column found him along the Little Bighorn the following day. Though the general had no reason to doubt an engagement had occurred, neither he nor his staff gave any credence to the Crow claim that the 7th Cavalry had been wiped out. According to plan, Terry, John Gibbon, and their combined cavalry and infantry force continued up the valley toward the battlefield. Colonel Gibbon:

[W]e caught sight, through the scattered timber, of a couple of Indian tepees standing in the open valley.… At length we reached the tepees, found them occupied by dead Indians laid out in state, and surrounded in every direction with the remnants and various odds and ends of a hastily abandoned camp. Tepee poles, skins, robes, pots, kettles, and pans lay scattered in every direction. But we had little time or inclination to comment on these sights, for every thought was now bent upon the possible fate of our fellow-soldiers, and the desire was intense to solve as soon as possible the dread doubt which now began to fill our minds. For, in searching about amongst the rubbish, someone had picked up a pair of bloody drawers, upon which was plainly written the words, 'Sturgis-7th Cavalry,' whilst a buckskin shirt recognized as belonging to Lieutenant [James] Porter, was discovered with a bullethole passing through it.

Summoning a company of mounted infantry, Terry ordered the men to comb the hills east of the campground. Gibbon:

Looking up the valley I caught sight of something on the top of a hill … which at once attracted my attention.… I sprang from my horse, and with a field glass looked long and anxiously at a number of dark objects which might be

either animals or stubby cedar trees.… One of General Terry's staff officers took the glass and seating himself on the ground peered long and anxiously at the spots.

"On returning to headquarters I found my friends turning their field glasses on the hills in every direction," noticed Lieutenant Edward McClernand, who had been sifting through the abandoned camp. "The fate of Custer was now more puzzling than ever. Our chief, General Terry, was calm but serious. He evidently was weighing the situation." Returning to John Gibbon:

Whilst watching…and wondering…the officer in charge of the mounted infantry party…rode up to where General Terry and I sat upon our horses, and his voice trembled as he said, "I have a very sad report to make. I have counted one hundred and ninety-seven dead bodies lying in the hills!" 'White men?' was the first question asked. 'Yes, white men.' A look of horror was upon every face, and for a moment no one spoke.

McClernand:

Now two horsemen were seen dashing toward us from up the valley.… As the hurrying riders drew nearer we discovered they were riding bare-back, then that they were white men, and finally two lieutenants, Wallace and Hare, sent by Reno.…

'Where is Custer?' they were asked. Wallace replied, 'The last we saw of him he was going along that high bluff … toward the lower end of the village. He took off his hat and waved to us. We do not know where he is now.'

'We have found him,' said General Terry, his eyes filling with tears.…
Reno's messengers sat their horses aghast at the information given them, and seemed slow to grasp the fact that their detachment had not played the major role in the drama that had been enacted.
Leaving Custer and his companions in death on the hills where we had found them, we placed ourselves under the guidance of Wallace and Hare to be taken to those of our comrades who had survived the catastrophe. They led us along the valley for some three and a half or four miles, where the village had stood the day before.

Again, Colonel Gibbon:

Nearly the whole valley was black and smoking with the fire which had swept over it.… Except the fire, the ground presented but few evidences of the conflict which had taken place. Now and then a dead horse was seen; but as I approached a bend of the creek just below the hill occupied by the troops, I came upon the body of a soldier lying on his face near a dead horse. He was stripped, his scalp gone, his head beaten in, and his body filled with bullet-holes and arrows.… More bodies of both men and horses were found close by, and it was noted that the bodies of men and horses laid almost always in pairs, and … the inference was drawn that in the run, the horses must have been killed first, and the riders after they fell.

The command was placed in camp here, and details at once set to work to haul away the dead horses and bury the men, both of which were already becoming offensive. Then mounting my horse, I proceeded to visit … Reno's command. As I rode a few hundred yards up the river towards the ford, bodies of men and horses were seen scattered along at intervals, and in the river itself dead horses were lying.

Amid cheers and tears, Reno's beleaguered command greeted Terry and his deliverers. As Godfrey noted, however, "The grave countenance of the General awed the men to silence." When it was revealed what had occurred just down the ridge a scant four miles away, there was only stunned disbelief.

While the seriously wounded were either tended to on the spot or carried carefully down to the camp, the recovery of bodies along the river continued. Some of the first corpses, including that of Doctor DeWolf, were discovered in the cuts of the bluffs where the victims had been mowed down during the Sunday rout. In the Little Bighorn itself, George Herendeen remembered another find.

[W]e found a dead horse in the middle of the river, just below where Reno had crossed in retreat. This horse lay in water too shallow to float him off. The horse was much bloated, and upon investigation we found a dead soldier under him. Whether he had been drowned by being caught under the horse … or whether he had been killed simultaneously with the horse, I do not know.

In the valley itself, the grass was littered with dead men and mounts. "They were covered with swarms of flies," said a horrified Marcus Reno, "and the odor from decomposing bodies under the blazing sun was intolerable."

After only a glance, the hideous mutilation and torture were obvious. One body was found with "a stick rammed down the throat."

"Another man," Herendeen observed, "had strips of his skin cut out of his body.… Many bodies were gashed with knives, and some had their noses and other members cut off." The wounds of interpreter Isaiah Dorman, the only black man with Custer, displayed a savagery reserved for only the most despised of enemies. Wrote a witness:

Isaiah lay with his breast full of arrows and an iron picket pin thrusted through his testicles into the ground, pinning him down.… Dorman's penis was cut off and stuffed in his mouth, which was regarded among the Indians as the deepest insult possible.… [H]e had small pistol balls in his legs from the knees down.… [His] body had been ripped open, and a coffee pot and cup which he carried with him were filled with his blood. What devilish purpose the Indians had in catching his blood I do not know.

If possible, the village exhibited scenes even more revolting. Reno:

One ghastly find was near the center of the field where three teepee poles were standing upright in the ground in the form of a triangle. On top of each were inverted camp kettles, while below them on the grass were the heads of three men.… The heads had been severed from the trunks by some very sharp instrument, as the flesh was cut smoothly. The three heads had been placed within the triangle, facing each other in a horrible, sightless stare.

"We found the ashes and debris of a large fire," Private Theodore Goldin added, "and near it, in the trodden grass, one of our party found two human heads which were so charred and burned as to be beyond recognition." Another private kicked over a camp kettle and found the head of a red-haired soldier staring back at him.

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The following day the troops turned to Custer's slaughtered command.

"The morning was bright," recalled Edward Godfrey, "and from the high bluffs we had a clear view of Custer's battle-field. We saw a large number of objects that looked like

white boulders scattered over the field. Glasses were brought into requisition, and it was announced that these objects were the dead bodies. Captain [Thomas] Weir exclaimed: 'Oh, how white they look!'"

"The scene … was beyond description," Reno wrote, "and it filled us with horror and anguish."

The dead had been … scattered in the wildest confusion over the ground, in groups of two or three, or piled in an indiscriminate mass of men and horses. They had lain thus for nearly three days under the fierce heat of the sun, exposed to swarms of flies and flesh-eating crows, and the scene was rendered even more desolate by the deep silence which seemed to hang like a weird mystery over the battlefield.

"It was a horrible sight," said another soldier. "There the bodies lay, mostly naked, and scattered over a field maybe a half mile square. We went among them to see how many we could recognize."

Although the corpses were bloated and discolored, many faces maintained a "pained, almost terrified expression." Private Jacob Adams:

The men…were…scalped and horribly mutilated. Some … were decapitated, while many bodies were lacking feet. … As I walked over the field I saw many unfortunate dead who had been propped into a sitting position and used as targets by bowmen who had proceeded to stick them full of steel-headed arrows.… Some bodies were set up on their knees and elbows and their hind parts had been shot full of arrows.

"Many of their skulls had been crushed in, eyes had been torn from their sockets, and hands … arms, legs and noses had been wrenched off," Reno noted. "Many had their flesh cut in strips the entire length of their bodies, and there were others whose limbs were closely perforated with bullets, showing that the torture had been inflicted while the wretched victims were still alive."

"The eyes of surviving comrades were filled with tears, and throats were choked with grief unspeakable," remembered Fred Girard as he moved amid the carnage. "It made me sick," another trooper confessed, "to see my fellow comrades … lying on the hillside, disemboweled, with stakes driven through their chests."

George Glenn came to a body and soon realized it was that of his former "bunky," Tom Tweed. "His crotch had been split up with an ax and one of his legs thrown up over his shoulder," Glenn recalled. "He was shot with arrows in both eyes. A wounded horse lay near him groaning, and we knocked him in the head with a bloody ax that lay nearby."

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Moving up the ridge, past scores of bodies, including those of trumpeter Henry Dose and newsman Mark Kellogg, the soldiers finally came to the scene of the last stand. Here,

according to a witness, the corpses lay thick. Lieutenant Godfrey came upon one butchered body, that of his old friend, Tom Custer.

It was lying downward, all the scalp was removed, leaving only tufts of his hair on the nape of his neck. The skull was smashed in and a number of arrows had been shot into the back of the head and in the body. I remarked that I believed it was Tom as he and I had often gone in swimming together and the form seemed familiar. We rolled the body over; the features where they had touched the ground were pressed out of shape and were somewhat decomposed. In turning the body, one arm which had been shot and broken, remained under the body; this was pulled out and on it we saw [a tattoo] 'T.W.C.' and the goddess of liberty and flag.… His belly had been cut open and his entrails protruded.

Nearby lay the older brother, the commander of the regiment. Jacob Adams:

General Custer was stripped with the exception of his sox. He had a gunshot wound in his head and another in his side, and in his left thigh there was a gash about eleven inches long that exposed the bone. Custer was not scalped … and I am sure he did not commit suicide.… There were no powder burns on [his] face and … it would have been next to impossible for a man to hold a gun far enough away from his face to escape such burns when committing suicide.

"When I arrived there," Godfrey later wrote, "General Custer's body had been laid out. … [Girard] … informed me that he preceded the troops there. He found the naked bodies of two soldiers, one across the other and Custer's naked body in a sitting posture between and leaning against them, his upper right arm along and on the topmost body, his right forearm and hand supporting his head in an inclining posture like one resting or asleep." Girard and Godfrey also saw something more—an arrow shaft had been rammed up the lieutenant colonel's penis.

With as much speed as possible, the troopers began to bury the dead. "[T]he stench was so great that my men began to vomit," one officer admitted. "Many times," another soldier added, "in taking hold of a body to lift it into the grave, the skin would slip from the wrist, or the shoulders would become dislocated."

"As we had but few spades, the burial of the dead was more of a pretense than reality," Edward McClernand confessed. "A number were simply covered with sage brush."

After the grim task, when most of the men had returned to the valley and were preparing to break camp, McClernand paused. Standing on the ridge, surveying the location of the last stand, the young officer replayed in his mind the dramatic, final moments of George Armstrong Custer.

He was dismounted, and doubtless many of his men also, the enemy was pressing, and here was a position on which they could stand and strike back—probably without hope of victory, but at least with the possibility of holding on until Reno or Benteen came, or that relief of dying like brave men. I think no thoughtful and unprejudiced man could have examined the last positions held by Custer, as marked by the dead, without being convinced that he was thinking clearly, fast and courageously. I said to myself, as did others doubtless, here a hero died. That his was the spirit of battle seemed clear from those who chose to die on the knoll with him.

Later that day, June 28, Alfred Terry quickly formed his command and with Reno, Benteen, and their numerous wounded in tow, the general led away toward the Bighorn River, where news of the disaster would soon spread to the outside world. As he moved along with the column, Edward McClernand recalled earlier that spring when the Crow scout had left his defiant message on the old bread box.

"It is a little strange," reflected the lieutenant, "considering the hundreds of miles we have marched over, that this taunt should have been left almost on the very spot where the one desperate fight of the campaign took place."

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Early on July 6, 1876, the steamboat *Far West* docked near Fort Abraham Lincoln, Dakota Territory. During the previous two days, dark currents had swirled mysteriously around the anxious garrison. In the words of one young officer:

There was whispering and excitement among the Indian police. There were rumors of a great battle. Those who saw the Indians and witnessed their movements knew that something unusual must have happened. But what? Who would not give worlds to know just why all this excitement among the Indians? Fleet-footed warriors, mounted on still fleeter animals, aided perhaps by signals, had brought the news even before the Far West came, but no white man knew. That it brought joy to them was reason enough why it should have brought depression to the whites.… Men and women moved anxiously, nervously, straining their eyes for the expected messenger, listening as footsteps fell.

The news came to us about 2 a.m. Captain William S. McCaskey … summoned all the officers to his quarters at once and there read to them the communication he had just received. … After we had recovered from the shock, Captain McCaskey requested us to assist him in breaking the news to the widows. It fell to my lot to accompany Captain McCaskey … to the quarters of Mrs. Custer.… We started on our sad errand a little before 7 o'clock on that … morning. I went to the rear of the Custer house, woke up Maria, Mrs. Custer's housemaid, and requested

her to rap on Mrs. Custer's door … On my way through the hall … I heard the opening of the door of Mrs. Custer's room. She had been awakened by the footsteps in the hall. She called me by ... name and asked me the cause of my early visit.

PART THREE

E

VERY month, it seems, yet another movie is released based upon some real or some fanciful event of World War Two. Invariably, like some

stylized Greek drama in which the actors all wear the same masks and all chant the same lines, the cast in these propagandistic morality plays are as predictable as the message. On one side are arrayed the Allies, the good guys; generally, these are the happy-go-lucky gum-chewing Americans who are heroically "fighting for freedom" and are striving to save the world and the folks back in Ohio from slavery; on the other side are the arrogant Germans, the evil Nazis; this is the dark force the world is being saved from, those over-bearing monsters who live only to murder, rape, torture, kill, and make lampshades and bars of soap out of defenseless Jews.

It has now been over 70 years since the conclusion of the so-called "Good War." Thousands of books, articles and movies have been devoted to this pivotal period and the supposedly heroic sacrifice of the so-called "Greatest Generation." Despite the sheer tonnage of material dedicated to the victor's version of WWII, there has yet to be an honest, accurate and straight-forward retelling of that cataclysmic event and what it really looked like, not merely from the victors' perspective, but through the eyes of the vanquished, as well.

The following is from my book *Hellstorm—The Death of Nazi Germany, 1944-1947.* To date, this book remains the only in-depth account of what the end of the war and the beginning of the so-called "peace" looked like from the German perspective. To this day, what happened to Germany and her people, especially after the war, remains the darkest and best-kept secret in world history. And to this day, what happened to Germany and her people also remains, by far, the greatest and most sadistic crime ever committed in the history of mankind.

UNSPEAKABLE

S

INCE the German invasion of the Soviet Union in September 1941, the fight on the Eastern Front had been little better than a savage war of annihilation. A

contest between "European Nationalism" on the one hand, and "International Communism" on the other, would have been a most desperate struggle under any conditions. But then, fighting for his life, Josef Stalin deliberately exacerbated the situation.

Dubious over the loyalty of his armed forces, aware of the massive Russian surrenders during the First World War, the Red premier steadfastly refused to sign the Geneva Convention on prisoners of war or the Hague Treaty regarding land warfare. It was Stalin's belief that if a soldier had no guarantee of survival in captivity, then he must of necessity fight to the death in battle. Despite such ruthless measures, Soviet troops surrendered by the hundreds of thousands in the first weeks and months of the war. Swamped by the flood of prisoners, strained to adequately clothe, feed and house such numbers, and understandably hesitant to even do so unless the Russians reciprocated, the Germans time and again tried to reach an accord with Stalin. The efforts were flung back with contempt.

"Soviet soldiers do not surrender," communist officials airily announced. "[A] prisoner captured alive by the enemy [is] *ipso facto* a traitor.... If they had fulfilled their duty as soldiers to fight to the last they would not have been taken prisoner."

"Everyone who was taken prisoner, even if they'd been wounded…was considered to have "surrendered voluntarily to the enemy," wrote Stalin's daughter, Svetlana, whose own brother was captured and promptly disowned by her father. "The government thereby washed its hands of millions of its own officers and men … and refused to have anything to do with them."

Hence, growled a disgruntled captain of Russian artillery, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, " [Moscow] did not recognize its own soldiers of the day before."

Not surprisingly, many Red Army men, including General Andrei Vlasov, swiftly turned on their government after capture and became "traitors" not only in name, but in fact, by joining the Germans in their anti-communist crusade.

That the Soviets would treat their own troops in such a deplorable manner bode ill for that German soldier, or Landser, unlucky enough to fall into enemy hands. Although responses varied greatly among Soviet units and some captured Germans were treated as POWs, most were not. During the first glorious days of German victory in 1941, the Red Army's headlong retreat precluded the likelihood that large numbers of Landsers would

be captured. Nevertheless, thousands of unwitting Germans did fall into communist hands and were dispatched on the spot.

On July 1, 1941, near Broniki in the Ukraine, the Soviets captured over 160 Germans, many of them wounded. In the words of Corporal Karl Jager:

After being taken prisoner … other comrades and I were forced to undress.… We had to surrender all valuable objects including everything we had in our pockets. I saw other comrades stabbed with a bayonet because they were not fast enough. Corporal Kurz had a wounded hand and ... could not remove his belt as quickly as desired. He was stabbed from behind at the neck so that the bayonet came out through the throat. A soldier who was severely wounded gave slight signs of life with his hands; he was kicked about and his head was battered with rifle butts. … Together with a group of 12 to 15 men I was taken to a spot north of the road. Several of them completely naked. We were about the third group coming from the road. Behind us the Russians commenced the executions … panic broke out after the first shots, and I was able to flee.

"My hands were tied up at my back … and we were forced to lie down.…," said another victim in the same group. "[A] Russian soldier stabbed me in the chest with his bayonet. Thereupon I turned over. I was then stabbed seven times in the back and I did not move any more … I heard my comrades cry out in pain. Then I passed out."

In all, 153 bodies were recovered by advancing Germans the following morning. Despite the summary slaughter of their own men at Broniki and elsewhere, Wehrmacht field marshals strictly forbid large-scale reprisals. One group which could expect no mercy from the Germans was the communist commissars who traveled with Red Army units. Composed "almost exclusively" of Jews, it was these fanatical political officers, many Germans felt, who were responsible for the massacres and mutilations of captured comrades. Explained one witness, Lieutenant Hans Woltersdorf of the elite SS:

One of our antitank gun crews had defended itself down to the last cartridge, really down to the last cartridge. Over thirty dead Russians lay before their positions. They then had to surrender. While still alive they had their genitals cut off, their eyes poked out, and their bellies slit open. Russian prisoners to whom we showed this declared that such mutilations took place by order of the commissars. This was the first I had heard of such commissars.

With the threat of torture and execution facing them, many idealistic German soldiers had an added impetus to fight to the death. In the minds of most Landsers, the war in the east was not a contest against the Russian or Slavic race in particular, but a crusade against communism. In the years following World War I, Marxist revolutionaries had nearly toppled the German government. Because most of the leaders were Jews, and because Lenin, Trotsky, and many other Russian revolutionaries were Jewish, the threat to Nazi Germany and Europe seemed clear. Hence, from Adolf Hitler down to the lowliest Landser, the fight in the east became a holy war against "Jewish Bolshevism."

"The poor, unhappy Russian people," said one shocked German soldier as he moved further into the Soviet Union. "Its distress is unspeakable and its misery heart-rending."

"When you see what the Jew has brought about here in Russia, only then can you begin to understand why the Fuhrer began this struggle against Judaism," another stunned Landser wrote, expressing a sentiment shared by many comrades. "What sort of misfortunes would have been visited upon our Fatherland, if this bestial people had gotten the upper hand?"

Following the devastating German defeat at Stalingrad in 1943, the “upper hand” did indeed pass to the enemy. Supplied by the US with a seemingly inexhaustible amount of goods, from tanks and planes to boots and butter, the resurgent Red Army assumed the offensive.

As the heretofore invincible Wehrmacht began its long, slow withdrawal west, a drama as vast and savage as the steppe itself unfolded, the likes of which the modern world had never witnessed. In dozens of major battles, in thousands of forgotten skirmishes, a primeval contest was waged wherein victory meant life and defeat meant death.

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Overwhelmingly outnumbered in men and materiel, especially the dreaded tank, for young German recruits sent to fill depleted ranks there was no subtle transition from peace to war on the Eastern Front—they simply stepped straight from the train or truck into the inferno. Likewise, the step from boy to man could, and often did, come within a matter of moments once the recruit reached the lines. Guy Sajer’s youth ended abruptly one day when his convoy was ambushed.

‘Anybody hit?’ one of the noncoms called out. ‘Let’s get going then.…’ Nervously, I pulled open the door [of the truck]. Inside, I saw a man I shall never forget, a man sitting normally on the seat, whose lower face had been reduced to a bloody pulp.

‘Ernst?’ I asked in a choking voice. ‘Ernst!’ I threw myself at him.… I looked frantically for some features on that horrible face. His coat was covered with blood.… His teeth were mixed with fragments of bone, and through the gore I could see the muscles of his face contracting. In a state of near shock, I tried to put the dressing somewhere on that cavernous wound.… Crying like a small boy, I pushed my friend to the other end of the seat, holding him in my arms.… Two eyes opened, brilliant with anguish, and looked at me from his ruined face.

In the cab of a … truck, somewhere in the vastness of the Russian hinterland, a man and an adolescent were caught in a desperate struggle. The man struggled with death, and the adolescent struggled with despair.… I felt that something had hardened in my spirit forever.

"The first group of T34’s crashed through the undergrowth," another terrified replacement recalled when Russian tanks suddenly shattered his once peaceful world.

I heard my officer shout to me to take the right hand machine.… All that I had learned in the training school suddenly came flooding back and gave me confidence.... It had been planned that we should allow the first group of T-34’s to roll over us.… The grenade had a safety cap which had to be unscrewed to reach the rip-cord. My fingers were trembling as I unscrewed the cap … [and] climbed out of the trench.…Crouching low I started towards the monster, pulled the

detonating cord, and prepared to fix the charge. I had now nine seconds before the grenade exploded and then I noticed, to my horror, that the outside of the tank was covered in concrete.… My bomb could not stick on such a surface.… The tank suddenly spun on its right track, turned so that it pointed straight at me and moved forward as if to run over me.

I flung myself backwards and fell straight into a partly dug slit trench and so shallow that I was only just below the surface of the ground. Luckily I had fallen face upwards and was still holding tight in my hand the sizzling hand grenade. As the tank rolled over me there was a sudden and total blackness.… The shallow earth walls of the trench began to collapse. As the belly of the monster passed over me I reached up instinctively as if to push it away and … stuck the charge on the smooth, unpasted metal.... Barely had the tank passed over me than there was a loud explosion. … I was alive and the Russians were dead. I was trembling in every limb.

Another Landser who found truth facing Russian tanks was eighteen-year-old Guy Sajer. Armed with single-shot "Panzerfausts," a shoulder-held anti-armor weapon, Sajer and five comrades cowered in a shallow hole. "Our fear reached grandiose proportions, and urine poured down our legs," admitted the young soldier. "Our fear was so great that we lost all thought of controlling ourselves."

Three tanks were moving toward us. If they rolled over the mound which protected us, the war would end for us in less than a minute. I … [raised] my first Panzerfaust, and my hand, stiff with fear, [was] on the firing button.

As they rolled toward us, the earth against which my body was pressed transmitted their vibrations, while my nerves, tightened to the breaking point, seemed to shrill with an ear-splitting whistle.… I could see the reflected yellow lights on the front of the tank, and then everything disappeared in the flash of light which I had released, and which burned my face. … To the side, other flashes of light battered at my eyes, which jerked open convulsively wide, although there was nothing to see. Everything was simultaneously luminous and blurred. Then a second tank in the middle distance was outlined by a glow of flame. …

We could hear the noise of a third tank.… It had accelerated, and was no more than thirty yards from us, when I grabbed my last Panzerfaust. One of my comrades had already fired, and I was temporarily blinded. I stiffened my powers of vision and regained my sight to see a multitude of rollers caked with mud churning past … five or six yards from us. An inhuman cry of terror rose from our helpless throats.

The tank withdrew into the noise of battle, and finally disappeared in a volcanic eruption which lifted it from the ground in a thick cloud of smoke. Our wildly staring eyes tried to fix on something solid, but could find nothing except smoke and flame. As there were no more tanks, our madness thrust us from our refuge, toward the fire whose brilliance tortured our eyes. The noise of the tanks was growing fainter. The Russians were backing away.

After pulling wounded from the burning tanks, Sajer collapsed in a heap. As the young Landser and his exhausted comrades well knew, however, the respite would be brief: "They would undoubtedly reappear in greater numbers, with the support of planes or artillery, and our despairing frenzy would count for nothing."

Sajer was correct. In yet another contest between man and machine, the soldier and his companions could only watch in helpless horror as the steel monsters overran a gun emplacement.

Our cries of distress were mingled with the screams of the two machine gunners and then the shouts of revenge from the Russian tank crew as it drove over the hole, grinding the remains of the two gunners into that hateful soil.… The

treads worked over the hole for a long time, and … the Russian crew kept shouting, ‘Kaputt, Soldat Germanski! Kaputt!’

Many scenes from the East Front, like the above, seemed scripted in hell. After a hastily organized force of mechanics, bakers and cooks had beat back one enemy assault, a group of Landsers, including Hans Woltersdorf, crept up to a damaged Russian tank. "The men looked into the tank," the lieutenant remembered, "and they were near vomiting, so they didn’t look further but instead went away, embarrassed. A headless torso, bloody flesh, and intestines were sticking to the walls."

Several soldiers did succeed in pulling an injured driver from the wreck. "He lay there, wearing a distinguished award for bravery," noted Woltersdorf.

The back of his head was gaping open and bloody brains were pouring out. He was foaming at the mouth and his breath was still rattling, the typical rattle after an injury to the back of the head. You’re dead but your lungs are still puffing.... I took his military papers and the award. Later, when it was all over, I would send them to his family and write to them that he had fought bravely to the last for his country … he had given his best … they could be proud of him … what does one write at such times?

Terrible in their own right, sights and sounds such as the above were made doubly horrifying by the haunting suspicion that the viewer was gazing down on his own fate. "One always sees oneself sticking to the walls in thousands of pieces like that," confessed Woltersdorf, "without a head, or being dragged from the tank with a death rattle in one’s throat."

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Facing cold, robot-like tanks was terrifying enough. When humans became such, the results were devastating. Perhaps the most frightening moment in any Landser’s life came when he first faced the human wave. In a nation so vast that it compassed two continents, men were a resource the Soviets could afford to waste … and did. Following a Russian artillery barrage upon his position, Max Simon redeployed surviving soldiers along a ridge.

"Then," the SS general wrote, "quite a long distance from our positions there were lines of brown uniformed men tramping forward. The first of these crossed a small river and was followed at about 200 meters distance by a second line. Then there rose out of the grass—literally from out of the ground—a third wave, then a fourth and a fifth."

"To see them, the Ivans, rise up from the ground and just stand there, thousands of them, was really frightening," said another who faced the human wave. "They would stand there, within range … silent, withdrawn and not heeding those who fell around them. Then they would move off, the first three lines marching towards us."

Returning to General Simon:

The lines of men stretched to the right and left of our regimental front over-lapping it completely and the whole mass of Russian troops came tramping solidly and relentlessly forward. It was an unbelievable sight, a machine gunner's dream.... At 600 meters we opened fire and whole sections of the first wave just vanished leaving here and there an odd survivor still walking stolidly forward. It was uncanny, unbelievable, inhuman. No soldier of ours would have continued to advance alone. The second wave had also taken losses but closed up towards the center, round and across the bodies of their comrades who had fallen with the first wave. Then, as if on a signal, the lines of men began running forward. As they advanced there was a low rumbling 'Hoooooraaay.'

"The sound of that bellowing challenge was enough to freeze the blood," admitted one trembling Landser. "Just the sound alone terrified the new recruits."
Again, Max Simon:

The first three waves had been destroyed by our fire, but not all of the men in them had been killed. Some who dropped were snipers who worked their way forward through the grass to open fire upon our officers and machine gun posts. The rush of the fourth wave came on more slowly for the men had to pick their way through a great carpet of bodies and as the Soviets moved towards us some of our men, forgetful of the danger, stood on the parapets of their slit trenches to fire at the oncoming Russians. The machine guns became hot from continual firing and there were frequent stoppages to change barrels....

The great mass of the Soviet troops was now storming up the slope towards us but our fire was too great and they broke. About an hour later a further five lines of men came on in a second assault. The numbers of the enemy seemed endless and the new waves of men advanced across their own dead without hesitation.... The Ivans kept up their attacks for three days and sometimes even during the night. Suddenly they stopped and withdrew.

While the slaughter of thousands in such suicidal assaults seemed senseless, the results were not altogether one-sided. The psychological wounds inflicted on the Germans were, as Gen. Simon acknowledged, perhaps an even greater blow than the physical havoc wrought on the Russians. "The number, duration and fury of those attacks had exhausted us ...," confessed Simon. "If the Soviets could waste men on our small move, and there was no doubt that these men had been sacrificed, how often, we asked ourselves, would they attack and in what numbers if the objective was really a supremely important one?"

The carnage following battles such as the above was truly horrific. Although most recruits soon became hardened after two or three similar encounters, no soldier ever became complacent about war. The battlefield had many grim faces and no two were alike. Surprisingly, some of the most shattering moments in a Landser's life concerned the dreadful impact war had on horses, thousands of which served both armies. Harald Henry remembered vividly one animal in particular, lying by the wayside:

It reared, someone gave it a mercy shot, it sprang up again, another fired.... [T]he horse still fought for its life, many shots. But the rifle shots did not quickly finish off the dying eyes of the horse.... Everywhere horses. Ripped apart by shells, their eyes bulging out from empty red sockets.... That is just almost worse than the torn-away faces of the men, of the burnt, half-charred corpses.

After just experiencing what he imagined was all the horror one battle had to give, Lieutenant Friedrich Haag noticed a "beautiful white horse grazing by a ditch."

An artillery shell ... had torn away his right foreleg. He grazed peacefully but at the same time slowly and in unspeakable grief swayed his bloody stump of a leg to and fro....I don't know if I can accurately describe the horror of this sight. … I said then … to one of my men: 'Finish that horse off!' Then the soldier, who just ten minutes before had been in a hard fight, replied: 'I haven't got the heart for it, Herr Lieutenant.' Such experiences are more distressing than all the "turmoil of battle" and the personal danger.

Although massed human assaults and tank battles were dramatic, earth-shaking events, surviving German soldiers could normally expect a welcome, if brief, respite between contests. Not so with the ever-lurking partisan war. For that Landser behind the front who dropped his guard, the result could mean instant death ... or worse.

"When German soldiers were captured by guerrillas, they were often abominably treated," one Wehrmacht general recounted. "[I]t was not unusual for the Soviets to torture their prisoners and then hang them up, sometimes with their genitals stuffed in their mouths." Other Landsers were released, then sent staggering down roads toward their comrades, naked, bloody, eyes gouged from sockets, castrated.

Unable to deal decisively with the civilian-clad irregulars, German reprisals against the surrounding communities were swift, grim and arbitrary.

"A partisan group blew up our vehicles," recorded one private, "[and] … shot the agricultural administrator and a corporal assigned to him in their quarters.... Early yesterday morning 40 men were shot on the edge of the city.… Naturally there were a number of innocent people who had to give up their lives.... One didn't waste a lot of time on this and just shot the ones who happened to be around."

As with commissars, "no quarter" was the standard fate of guerrillas who fell into German hands. Wrote a witness:

Businesslike, the men of the field police emerge and tie with oft-practiced skill seven nooses on the balcony railing and then disappear behind the door of the dark room.... The first human package, tied up, is carried outside. The limbs are tightly bound ... a cloth covers his face. The hemp neckband is placed around his neck, hands are tied tight, he is put on the balustrade and the blindfold is removed from his eyes. For an instant you see glaring eyeballs, like those of an escaped horse, then wearily he closes his eyelids, almost relaxed, never to open them again. He now slides slowly downward, his weight pulls the noose tight, his muscles begin their hopeless battle. The body works mightily, twitches, and within the fetters a bit of life struggles to its end. It's quick; one after the other are brought out, put on the railing.... Each one bears a placard on his chest proclaiming his crime.... Sometimes one of them sticks out his tongue as if in unconscious mockery and immoderate amounts of spittle drip down on the street.

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As the Wehrmacht was pressed inexorably west, the daily attrition was staggering. Repeated Russian attacks opened gaps in German ranks simply too great to be filled.

Outnumbered sometimes ten to one, each Landser was thus expected to fight as ten if they were to survive. Many did. After beating back waves of Soviets with only a handful of men, Leopold von Thadden-Trieglaff refused to abandon his tiny section of line. Holding on throughout the night, the surrounded squad again fought furiously the following dawn.

"[A] hail of fire rained on us, from right, from left," recorded the young soldier in his journal. "In a few minutes our bunker was full of wounded and I struggled to quiet the poor fellows.… Screams and groans, and singing. I had to strain every nerve in order to remain as calm as before."

Finally, a German counterattack broke through and rescued the survivors, ending "the most terrible night and the hardest battle of my life.…," wrote Thadden-Trieglaff. "As I returned to my command post in the village I gaped at the dead comrades. I was so shaken that I almost cried. … When might this hideous defensive struggle come to an end?"

For the heroic twenty-year-old, that end came the following day when he was killed.
As the crushing attrition ground the German Army into the Russian mud, the turnover rate from death and wounds was tremendous. Green recruits often found themselves within months, even weeks, the oldest veterans in their unit.
"I noticed that it was particularly in the first few days that newcomers were most likely to get killed," observed Jan Montyn.

Gert was one of those newcomers. He was sixteen....I saw in his eyes, behind his round spectacles, the same bewilderment that I had felt myself when I was finding my way around that first day—almost a month ago now. His legs were trembling, he kept blinking. He had never held a real gun in his hands before. And I felt that he would not be with us for long. ‘You have to think carefully about everything you do,’ I told him. ‘You must

German Landsers

not allow anything to become a habit. On the other side there are snipers on the look-out day and night. If you as much as strike a match, you are finished. They notice every regularity in your behavior. When you have to scoop out a trench, don't throw the earth over the side in the same place twice.' … Gert nodded. He would remember. But less than two hours later I heard a cry. He had climbed out of the trench. He had been hit with his trousers down. In ten paces I was with him, and pulled him back into the trench by his legs. Oh, you idiot! Did I have to say that ...? There was a big hole in his groin. I pulled a roll of substitute bandage out of my breast pocket. But the poor quality paper was drenched within a few seconds. I tried to close the wound by pressing on it with my thumbs, begging and praying that someone might come along. I dared not call; that might provoke mortar fire. Gert lay panting, his mouth half open. He did not seem to feel any pain. For God's sake let someone come. No one came. The blood that gushed through my fingers mingled with the mud. And Gert no longer moved.

Added to the trauma of watching comrades die one by one, was concern for the safety of loved ones at home. Unlike Allied soldiers, whose words from home brought comfort and cheer, for the German Landser a letter from a loved one was merely one more burden to bear. Penned Martin Poppel in his diary:

My wife wrote to me: 'Today we are worn out after this terrible hail of bombs. To be hearing the howling of these things all the time, waiting for death at any moment, in a dark cellar, unable to see.… Everything gone.' No, here at the front we musn't think about it.... We understood the feelings of the people at home, suffered with them and feared for our loved ones who had to bear terror bombing.

"A few days ago, " scribbled a tormented sergeant, "I found out that just at the same time as we dreamed of home, the rubble was smoking in my home city of Mannheim. What a bitter irony."

" These pigs … think they can soften us up in that way. But that is a mistake, a mistake," growled another sergeant. "Ah, if only the Fuhrer would send a pair of ... divisions to England. They would deal a death dance that would give the devil himself the creeps. Oh, I have a rage, a wild hatred."

Despite official orders against killing prisoners, the unofficial reality was often quite different. Living without hope, dealing with death on a daily basis, aware of the fate their loved ones at home were facing, as well as their own should they be captured, many crazed, brutalized individuals could not be restrained.

" A prolonged and penetrating cry rose from the hole on my left....," Guy Sajer noted after one desperate fight. "Then there was a cry for help."

We arrived at the edge of a foxhole, where a Russian, who had just thrown down his revolver, was holding his hands in the air. At the bottom of the hole, two men were fighting. One of them, a Russian, was waving a large cutlass, holding a man from our group pinned beneath him. Two of us covered the Russian who had raised his hands, while a young [corporal] jumped into the hole and struck the other Russian a blow on the back of his neck with a trenching tool.… The German who had been under him … ran up to ground level. He was covered with blood, brandishing the Russian knife with one hand … while with the other he tried to stop the flow of blood pouring from his wound.

'Where is he?' he shouted in a fury. 'Where's the other one?' In a few bounding steps he reached the ... prisoner. Before anyone could do anything, he had run his knife into the belly of the petrified Russian.

Following three days of frenzied fighting, Sajer and his sleepless comrades finally snapped.

Sometimes one or two prisoners might emerge from their hideout with their hands in the air, and each time the same tragedy repeated itself. Kraus killed four of them on the lieutenant's orders; the Sudeten two; Group 17, nine. Young Lindberg, who had been in a state of panic ever since the beginning of the offensive, and who had been either weeping in terror or laughing in hope, took Kraus's machine gun and shoved two Bolsheviks into a shell hole. The two wretched victims ... kept imploring his mercy.… But Lindberg, in a paroxysm of uncontrollable rage, kept firing until they were quiet.

We were mad with harassment and exhaustion. … We were forbidden to take prisoners.… We knew that the Russians didn't take any ... [that] it was either them or us, which is why my friend Hals and I threw grenades … at some Russians who were trying to wave a white flag.

Nevertheless, amid the insane upheaval of combat, the same soldier who might one moment murder helpless prisoners could the next risk his own life to pull men from burning enemy tanks. Hans Woltersdorf stood for one eternal instant, his machine-gun trained on several Russians he had surprised, the last flicker of humanity struggling mightily against all the dark forces of his past.

"Do I shoot or not?" the lieutenant asked himself, as the terrified prisoners begged for mercy. "They got up.…, stumbled backwards a few steps more to the fir thicket, turned round, put their hands down and ran like the devil. … Did I try to shoot? Did my machine gun really fail to function, as I claimed later?"

Very often, death was the highest act of kindness one could show an enemy. "On Tuesday I knocked out two T34's ... ," one Landser wrote. "Afterward I drove past the smoking remains. From the hatch there hung a body, head down, his feet caught, and his legs burning up to his knees. The body was alive, the mouth moaning. He must have suffered terrible pain. And there was no possibility of freeing him. … I shot him, and as I did it, the tears ran down my cheeks. Now I have been crying for three nights about a dead Russian tank driver."

"From time to time one of us would emerge from torpor and scream," admitted Guy Sajer. "These screams were entirely involuntary: we couldn't stop them. They were produced by our exhaustion.… Some laughed as they howled; others prayed. Men who could pray could hope." Sajer continues:

We felt like lost souls who had forgotten that men are made for something else … that love can sometimes occur, that the earth can be productive and used for something other than burying the dead. We were madmen, gesturing and moving without thought or hope. … Lindberg ... had collapsed into a kind of stupor. … The Sudeten … had begun to tremble … and to vomit uncontrollably. Madness had invaded our group, and was gaining ground rapidly.… I saw ... Hals leap to his machine gun and fire at the sky.… I also saw the [sergeant] ... beat the ground with his clenched fist. … [I] shout[ed] curses and obscenities at the sky. … After hours and then days of danger ... one collapses into unbearable madness, and a crisis of nerves is only the beginning. Finally, one vomits and collapses, entirely brutalized and inert, as if death had already won.

"[We were] the dead or the dead to be," stated one Landser simply.
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As the East Front moved steadily west, the struggle became even more desperate. By the winter of 1944, the Red Army had finally driven the invaders from Russian soil and was pressing them through Poland. Although enormous losses had melted away much German manpower, and although the odds remained overwhelmingly in the Soviets' favor, the Red Army suffered grievously as well. For every German casualty on the field of battle,

there were four Russians. Many Soviet units had been reduced to a mere 50% of their original strength. Consequently, Red ranks were increasingly filled by troops from far eastern provinces. "This is not the Red Army," spit one Russian officer. "The Red Army perished on the battlefields in 1941 and 1942. These are the hordes of Asia."

In addition to Asians, Soviet officials called up a motley reserve—boys as young as thirteen, women, cripples, even convicts. "We opened up our penitentiaries and stuck everybody into the army," Stalin admitted. If possible, these raw levies were thrown away with more criminal disregard than ever. Wrote a German soldier:

It does not matter that these conscripts are untrained, that many are without boots of any kind and that most of them have no arms. Prisoners whom we took told us that those without weapons are expected to take up those from the fallen.… I saw ... attacks which were preceded by solid blocks of people marching shoulder to shoulder across the minefields which we had laid. Civilians and Army punishment battalions alike advanced like automata, their ranks broken only when a mine exploded killing and wounding those around it. The people seemed never to flinch nor to quail and we noticed that some who fell were then shot by a smaller wave of commissars or officers who followed very closely behind.

"This was not war anymore," a Landser who witnessed the massacres confided. "It was murder."

Of all the horrors the East Front could inflict—human waves, Red crewmen bolted inside burning tanks, murder of prisoners, partisan atrocities—the facet most frightening to the average Landser was undoubtedly "Ivan" himself.

"The Russian infantryman … always defended himself to the last gasp.…," remembered Gen. Max Simon. "[E]ven crews in burning tanks kept up fire for as long as there was breath in their bodies. Wounded or unconscious men reached for their weapons as soon as they regained consciousness."

Added another German soldier, Erich Dwinger:

Among the prisoners waiting to be ferried back across the river were wounded, many of whom had been badly burnt by flame-throwers.… Their faces had no longer any recognizable human features but were simply swollen lumps of meat. One of them also had had his lower jaw torn away by a bullet and this wound he had bandaged roughly. Through the rags his windpipe, laid bare, was visible and the effort it made as his breath snorted through it. Another soldier had been hit by five bullets and his right shoulder and his whole arm was a ragged mass of flesh. He had no bandages and the blood oozed from his wounds as if from a row of tubes....

Not one of them was moaning as they sat there in the grass.… Why did they not moan? But this was not the most tragic picture of that day.... [S]ome of our soldiers brought out barrels of margarine and loaves of Russian bread. They began their distribution more than thirty meters distant from the place where the badly wounded were lying and these rose up, yes, even the dying rose up quickly and in an inexpressible stream of suffering hurried toward the distribution point. The man without a jaw swayed as he stood up, the man with the five bullet wounds raised himself by his good arm... and those with burned faces ran ... but this was not all; a half dozen men who had been lying on the ground also went forward pressing back into their bodies with their left hands the intestines which had burst through the gaping wounds in their stomach wall. Their right hands were extended in gestures of supplication.... [A]s they moved down each left behind a broad smear of blood upon the grass...and not one of them cried ... none moaned.

As Dwinger makes implicit, such scenes left a profound impression on thousands of Landsers. The almost unearthly stoicism of the Russian, his fatalism, his willingness to suffer and die in silence, was bewildering to German soldiers. To some, it was as if the harsh climate and crushing conditions of communism had molded a man in which normal human emotions were no longer important.

"It's not people we're fighting against here," one Landser burst out, "but simply animals." Perhaps. And yet, as deep as their differences undoubtedly were, there were also similarities, some as elemental and ancient as the earth itself. On December 24, 1944, a strange, seemingly impossible understanding was reached by the deadly foes in which each side promised to stop hating the other "from four o'clock in the afternoon until six o'clock the following morning."
"An unreal silence fell," recalled Jan Montyn.

Hesitantly, we crawled out into the open. We on our side. They on theirs. Step by step we approached one another, almost timidly. And the enemy, of whom we had seen nothing until then but the vague movement of a helmet or the barrel of a gun, suddenly turned out to be boys like ourselves. They too were dressed in rags, they too were starving, ill, filthy.

We met in the middle of no-man's land. We shook hands, exchanged names and cigarettes. They tried out their few words of German, we our Russian. We laughed at one another's accents. Merry Christmas. We made big bonfires, shared out our Christmas rations....

When we withdrew, after midnight, each to his own side, the fires in no-man's land were still glowing. For several hours the silence lasted. Then firing broke out. Was it heavier than the day before? Not at all. But there were more casualties than ever. The break, however brief, had broken the resistance of many of us.

Obviously, by the winter of 1944, German soldiers on the East Front were well aware that all their sacrifices during three years of war had been for naught; defeat was inevitable. Close as victory had once been, by invading the Soviet Union tiny Germany had unleashed a force of almost unlimited resources; a colossus spanning much of the globe. To continue the struggle against such a giant was hopeless. And yet, many German soldiers, especially those of the elite SS, were determined to fight to the death, or, as one private wrote, "to sell our skins as dearly as possible." Explained an observer:

Even the last soldier was aware that the war was lost. He was aiming to survive, and the only sense he could see was to protect the front in the East to save as many refugees as possible...[H]e was hoping for a political solution for ending the war.... but ... the demand for unconditional surrender left in the light of self-respect no alternative but to continue the hopeless fighting.

As was the case during the Christmas truce, when "Fritz" looked into the face of "Ivan" the White Russian, or "Popov" the Ukrainian, he generally saw himself reflected. Not so the inscrutable Mongolians and other Asiatic "slit eyes" that usually followed just behind the front. In their faces the German saw something ferocious and frightening and something not seen in Europe since the days of Ghengis Khan. Lurking in the back of every Landser's mind, especially after the horror at Nemmersdorf, was the nightmare

should this new "yellow peril" reach the Reich to run loose among the cities, towns and farms of Germany, among wives, sweethearts, sisters, and mothers.

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While the end of Nazi Germany loomed in the east, the end also steadily advanced from the west. Unlike the howling savagery to the east, fraught with nightmarish ferocity, defeat in the west came methodically, inexorably and, judged by the standards of the east, almost silently.

Following its devastating defeat during the Ardennes offensive of December 1944, the Wehrmacht withdrew and regrouped behind the "West Wall," a mostly imaginary

line that roughly traced the Reich's western border. There, as elsewhere, the German Army was a dim shadow of its former self, vastly outnumbered in men and materiel, but

above all, totally overwhelmed in the air.

"We felt powerless before the immeasurable material superiority of the Americans, without which the Russians and British would have capitulated long since ...," revealed one German officer.

Nevertheless, the hard-pressed Landser was still more than a match for the American "GI" and the British "Tommy." Whenever the two sides met on anything approaching equal numbers, the results were always the same. Defending its homeland reinvigorated the German Army, of course, but during the fighting in Italy and North Africa, the outcome was similar. Asked his opinion of American troops during the fighting in North Africa—a campaign where Germany's ally, the Italian Army, had scattered and surrendered like sheep—one captive Landser told his US interrogators bluntly: "The Americans are to us what the Italians are to you."

Though American commanders were understandably outraged by such sentiment, the panic created among Allied ranks during the Ardennes offensive only reinforced this assessment within the German Army. One reason for the Landser's low opinion of his American adversary could simply be attributed to lack of experience. Sights and sounds that many German soldiers had long since become accustomed to were terrifying novelties to most GIs. Remembered a British sergeant:

The Americans will bunch, whereas we go up two sides of a road.... They were shouting at each other and firing at nothing.... It appeared that the American infantrymen were not trained in 'battle noises.' They seemed to drop to the ground and fire, whenever shots were heard close by. When passing a burning farmhouse, there was a sound of what appeared to be a machine-gun; no one could have been in the house, because of the flames, and it was obviously ammunition burning; but it took some time to get the Americans up and on again. As we [proceeded] I saw a figure in a long German greatcoat rise to his feet from the center of a field, and walk towards us with his hands up. The man was Volkssturm [militia], about 50 or 60 years of age, a long, thin chap. Before we could do anything about it, three Americans let fly with their carbines and the figure fell. God, we were angry.

While small arms fire was frightening, green US troops found artillery barrages utterly horrifying.

"[S]hells would not only tear and rip the body," said one frantic American, "they tortured one's mind almost beyond the brink of sanity."

"[T]he pure physical terror that savages you when loud and violent death is screaming down from the sky and pounding the earth around you, smashing and pulping everything in search for you" was, a comrade added, "emasculating." Recalled another American novice:

I asked [the sergeant] if he was hit and he sort of smiled and said no, he had just pissed his pants. He always pissed them, he said, when things started and then he was okay. He wasn't making any apologies either, and then I realized something wasn't quite right with me.... There was something warm down there and it seemed to be running down my

leg.... I told the sarge. I said, ‘Sarge, I’ve pissed too,’ or something like that and he grinned and said, ‘Welcome to the war.’

Accustomed to the bloodless "clean" kills of Hollywood, sudden, hideous sights also worked to unman the average American newcomer. After taking direct hits, some saw their buddies vaporize in a spray of "red spots." Others viewed comrades lying along roads, nothing more than "half a body, just naked buttocks and the legs." With the war obviously nearing its end, and with sights like the above vivid in their minds, few GIs "went looking for a Purple Heart." Also, and as was the case in 1917, many American soldiers suffered what some observers called "spiritual emptiness;" a seeming uncertainty as to what exactly they were fighting for ... or fighting against.

Despite years of anti-Nazi propaganda and attempts to demonize the German soldier, front-line troops, as always, were first to discard hate. From released or escaped prisoners, it soon became apparent that Allied POWs were treated well and accorded all the rights of the Geneva Convention. Additionally, details that were seemingly trivial matters to politicians, propagandists and rearechelon troops were all-important concerns to the actual fighters.

"One thing I’ll say for the Germans," a British Tommy admitted, "they were better than we were with enemy dead; buried them properly and neatly with their equipment ... over the crosses."

Not surprisingly, "understandings" among the adversaries were quickly reached to make the war more tolerable to both parties. "We maintained very friendly communications with the Germans...," confessed an American major. "Before they shelled Homberg they would let us know in advance the exact time. Before we shelled Leverkusen we would let the Germans know in advance. So everybody took cover ahead and nobody got hurt." On countless other occasions front-line troops met, mixed, traded trinkets, even socialized.

On more than one occasion, drunken American, British and German soldiers found themselves rioting together in the same bars and brothels and even standing in the same lines to use the same restrooms.

Such incidents as the above had a way of putting an alltoo human face on the "evil Hun." The same factors which worked on Allied attitudes of the German worked on German attitudes of the Allies. Unlike the East Front, German soldiers were well aware that their foe in the west was a signatory of the Geneva Convention. Under this agreement, Landsers were guaranteed by law the status of POW upon capture or surrender. And like their Allied counterparts, with the end of war in sight, many "Jerries" along the West Wall were unwilling to play hero. "I am neither looking for an Iron Cross," a German

soldier declared, "nor a wooden one." Also, it was no secret that Landsers, high and low, considered the Western Allies the lesser of two evils. With the Red Army roaring across Germany from the east, many Germans were secretly hoping the Americans might occupy what remained of the Reich before the communists did.

Nevertheless, and although the war in the west was not characterized by the same "do or die" determination as it was in the east, thousands of patriotic German officers and men were committed to defend their homeland to the "last ditch." As the Americans and British pressed the Wehrmacht back from the West Wall, then over the Rhine, a glimpse at the task faced is given by an English officer from the town of Rees:

They had been chased out of France, Belgium and Holland, into Germany, back over the Rhine, and now street by street across Rees into a corner. Yet they were still fighting it out.... The situation now was that the enemy were confined to the last hundred yards, at the very tip of the east end, but they were in a strong position with deep trenches and concrete and any attempts to get at it were met by heavy fire. I was going to make a last effort with C Company, when in came four or five prisoners, including a captain, who said he was in command.... He was marched in front of me as I sat at my table poring over the map, and he gave me a spectacular Hitler salute which I ignored.... He was a nasty piece of work, cocksure and good-looking in a flashy sort of way, but I had to admire the brave resistance which he had put up. The strain of battle was apparent in the dark black chasms under his eyes.

In spite of such fierce resistance, the massive weight of the Allied advance slowly ground all opposition into the mud. "[I]t must be stated that the morale of our men [in the west] is slowly sinking....," admitted propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels. "[T]hey have now been fighting uninterruptedly for weeks and months. Somewhere the physical strength to resist runs out."

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If morale among troops was "slowly sinking," that of many civilians in the west had long since sunk. After enduring years of air attacks and now invasion, some Germans were more than willing to accept defeat. Unlike the terrified trekkers to the east, relatively few Germans in the west abandoned their homes. Despite the best efforts of Nazi propaganda, the racial and cultural ties with the Western Allies, particularly the Americans, was simply too strong to arouse the same depth of fear as did the Soviets. Hardly was there a German family that did not have at least one close relative in America and most felt that there was an essential goodness in any people who could give to the world a Mickey Mouse, Shirley Temple or Laurel and Hardy. Far from fleeing the advancing Allies, many civilians actually ran to greet them. Remembered a young German:

[O]ne very sunny morning we saw across the fields a convoy of vehicles coming, and as they came closer we saw they were Americans, with little white stars on the side. There was a jeep up front and then tanks and troops carriers, and the bloke in the jeep had both his hands up, and in one hand he had a loaf of bread and in the other a lump of cheese. They came on very slowly…and as they came the Home Guard threw down their weapons and rushed toward the Americans, and my mother leapt up and started racing over the fields, with me about two hundred yards behind her,

straight toward the American column. The man in the jeep turned out to be a very fat American sergeant, and my mother threw her arms around his neck and kissed him and hugged him in absolute joy and relief. It was all over.

"Wherever we drove through the Rhineland those first weeks in April the feelings of the German people were unmistakable," reported war correspondent, Leonard Mosley.

The war was not yet over but they knew it was lost, and they were engaged in an instinctive effort to save something from the wreck. The mass of the people were casting off National Socialism like an old coat, almost without grief or regret, determined to forget it and to work to recreate, in cooperation with their conquerors, the things that had now been destroyed.… The men and women we stopped on the streets to ask the way were polite and helpful; they gathered round in bunches when they heard us speaking German, and bombarded us with questions: 'How far had we advanced? When would the war be over? Where were the Russians?'

When reports from recaptured towns and villages stated that the Americans (or, "Amis") had treated civilians well and had not even engaged in looting, the desire among other Germans to surrender became overwhelming. Home Guard units were disbanded, white flags sprouted from doors and windows and many communities refused to aid the German Army in any way.

"Twice," recalled a British POW, "I watched an SS corporal go to a house and ask for water and each time the housewife, having seen his uniform, slammed the door in his face. He meekly retreated."

In a desperate bid to shore up crumbling resistance, Dr. Goebbels's propaganda office warned citizens that "these Americans were combat troops whose only function was to fight; but after them come the rearguard service troops and especially the Jews, who have in all other cases acted ruthlessly against the population." Unfortunately, the truth in these words became apparent once the front-line troops pushed on.

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Unlike the wild and almost unmanageable Red Army, US military commanders might have prevented much of the excesses committed by their men against helpless civilians had they so willed it. In most cases, however, they did not. On the contrary, the words of some high-ranking officers seemed designed to encourage atrocities.

"We are engaged in a total war, and every individual member of the German people has turned it into such," US general Omar Bradley announced. "If it had not been Hitler leading the Germans, then it would have been someone else with the same ideas. The German people enjoy war and are determined to wage war until they rule the world and impose their way of life on us."

"[T]he German is a beast," echoed Supreme Allied Commander, Dwight David Eisenhower, a man whose hatred of all things German was well known. In much the same vein as Soviet premier Josef Stalin and American president Franklin Roosevelt, Eisenhower advocated the outright massacre of German army officers, Nazi Party members and others. In all, according to the American general, at least 100,000 Germans should be "exterminated."

"In heart, body, and spirit ... every German is Hitler!" faithfully trumpeted the US Army newspaper, *Stars and Stripes*. "Hitler is the single man who stands for the beliefs of Germans. Don't make friends with Hitler. Don't fraternize. If in a German town you bow to a pretty girl or pat a blond child ... you bow to Hitler and his reign of blood."

Not surprisingly, such sentiment from above quickly worked its way down. Soon after combat soldiers moved out of a community and rear echelon troops moved in, the reality of occupation became clear. Wrote one shocked reporter, William Stoneman of the *Chicago Daily News*:

Frontline troops are rough and ready about enemy property. They naturally take what they find if it looks interesting, and, because they are in the front lines, nobody says anything.... But what front-line troops take is nothing compared to the damage caused by wanton vandalism of some of the following troops. They seem to ruin everything, including the simplest personal belongings of the people in whose homes they are billeted. Today, we have had two more examples of this business, which would bring tears to the eyes of anybody who has appreciation of material values.

"We were crazy with happiness when the Americans came," one woman said, "but what [they] did here was quite a disappointment that hit our family pretty hard."

They broke everything and threw it all outside. Later, we found only piles of rubbish.... Those who came in the first few days were fighting troops and they had seen something of the war. But those who came later ... hadn't seen anything at all. And many of these very young soldiers wanted to experience something, like repeat a little of the war.... We had original watercolors and so forth on the walls, which weren't framed, and they wrote all over them. In the cellar we had bottles of apple juice. When we wanted to get some later, after the Americans had left, they'd drunk it all up and filled the bottles with urine. Or, in our cooking pots was toilet paper, used toilet paper.

In many towns, the invaders unlocked jails, prisons and concentration camps and invited the inmates to join the revelry. "They just opened up the camps and let them go," noted Amy Schrott, a young German raised in New Jersey. "The Russians and Poles were looting the houses and killing the shopkeepers. Then they began raping the girls."

When a prison camp at Salzwedel was thrown open, a mob of various nationalities literally tore the town to pieces. Locating the mayor, a gang of Russians dragged the man, his wife and daughter to the cemetery. After lashing the mayor to a tombstone, a line of laughing men began taking turns with his naked wife as she screamed on her hands and knees. When a Mongolian started to rape his daughter, the father, in a final fit of rage, tore the tombstone from the ground, then fell over dead.

A glimpse at the anarchy unleashed is given by Christabel Bielenberg of Furtwangen as she pedaled a bicycle near the town:

It was like a drunken circus along the road. There were hordes of liberated Russian forced laborers, all dressed in clothes they had looted from all the ransacked shops, roaring with laughter and falling all over the road. And there were soldiers in huge army trucks tearing past all over the road in a crazy kind of way—it was a fantastic scene....

When we got to Furtwangen it was in pandemonium. All the radios had been requisitioned from their German owners and put in the windows facing out-ward toward the street—and each radio was playing a different program at full blast. All the freed Russians and Poles were waltzing down the street—it was just like a carnival going through the town. The Germans were walking round in a daze wearing white armbands as a sign of surrender. As for the French... [t]he troops were not French but Moroccan.... These were the men who occupied our area.

That was when the raping started. [They] raped up and down our valley in the first few days. Two people were shot trying to protect their wives. Then they moved out and another lot of French colonial troops moved in— Goums from the Sahara, tall, black, strange people in uniforms like gray dressing-gowns. They were terrifying. First they came into Rohrbach and stole all the chickens and my children's rabbits. A few days later they came at night and surrounded every house in the village and raped every female between 12 and 80.... What was so frightening about them was the silent way in which they moved.... [T]hey came up to the door and one of them asked: 'Where's your husband?' I said that he was away and as I was talking to them I suddenly realized that one of them was standing right behind me—he had climbed in through a window and crept right up to me through that creaking wooden...house without making the slightest sound.

While Moroccan and other French colonial troops had an especially bad reputation and raped on a massive scale in Germany and Italy, American and British soldiers were not above reproach. "Our own Army and the British Army ... have done their share of looting and raping...," a US sergeant admitted. "[W]e too are considered an army of rapists."

"Many a sane American family would recoil in horror if they knew how 'Our Boys' conduct themselves... over here," added another GI.

"We expected Russian lawlessness...," said one German, "but we once believed the Americans were different."
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In part because of propaganda and the attitudes publicly espoused by western political and military leaders that "the only good German is a dead one," in part because of unfounded rumors of massacres and rapes committed at captured US field hospitals, in part because of genuine German atrocities, such as at Malmedy, wherein scores of American POWs were mowed down by SS troops during the Ardennes campaign—because of these and other factors, large numbers of captured or surrendering Germans were simply slaughtered on the spot.

Among many American units, "take no prisoner" was the motto. For those members of the SS, Wehrmacht and Volkssturm lucky enough to survive capture, death often awaited behind the lines. In the transit from front to rear, hundreds of prisoners were allowed to suffocate, starve or freeze to death in railroad cars. Upon reaching the prison camps, thousands more perished. Wrote an eyewitness from Rheinberg in April:

One inmate at Rheinberg was over 80 years old, another was aged nine.... Nagging hunger and agonizing thirst were their companions, and they died of dysentery. A cruel heaven pelted them week after week with streams of rain.... [A]mputees slithered like amphibians through the mud, soaking and freezing. Naked to the skies day after day and night after night, they lay desperate in the sand...or slept exhaustedly into eternity in their collapsing holes.

With General Eisenhower turning a blind eye to the Geneva Convention, only the threat of retaliation against Allied POWs still held in Germany prevented a massacre of prodigious proportions.

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While the British were mopping up huge areas to the north, Americans were doing the same further south. For the most part, US forces were also greeted with white flags, cheers and tears of relief from a war-weary populace. When the Americans did meet determined defenders, it was often small pockets of old men and little boys. Reflected a GI: "I could not understand it, this resistance, this pointless resistance to our advance. The war was all over—our columns were spreading across the whole of Germany and Austria. We were irresistible. We could conquer the world; that was our glowing conviction. And the enemy had nothing. Yet he resisted and in some places with an implacable fanaticism."

Those defenders who survived to surrender were often mowed down where they stood. Gustav Schutz remembered stumbling upon one massacre site where a Labor Service unit had knocked out several American tanks.

"[M]ore than a hundred dead Labor Service men were lying in long rows—all with bloated stomachs and bluish faces," said Schutz. "We had to throw up. Even though we hadn't eaten for days, we vomited."

Already murderous after years of anti-German propaganda in the Jewish media and Hollywood, when US forces entered the various concentration camps and discovered huge piles of naked and emaciated corpses, their rage became uncontrollable. As Gen. Eisenhower, along with his lieutenants, Patton and Bradley, toured the prison camp at Ohrdruf Nord, they were sickened by what they saw. In shallow graves or lying haphazardly in the streets were thousands of skeleton-like remains of German and Jewish prisoners, as well as gypsies, communists, and convicts.

"I want every American unit not actually in the front lines to see this place," ordered Eisenhower. "We are told that the American soldier does not know what he is fighting for. Now, at least, he will know what he is fighting *against*."

"In one camp we paraded the townspeople through, to let them have a look," a staff officer with Patton said. "The mayor and his wife went home and slashed their wrists."

"Well, that's the most encouraging thing I've heard," growled Eisenhower, who immediately wired Washington and London, urging government and media representatives to come quickly and witness the horror for themselves.

Given the circumstances, the fate of those Germans living near this and other concentration camps was as tragic as it was perhaps predictable. After compelling the people to view the bodies, American and British officers forced men, women and children to dig up with their hands the rotting remains and haul them to burial pits. Wrote a witness at one camp:

[A]ll day long, always running, men and women alike, from the death pile to the death pit, with the stringy remains of their victims over their shoulders. When one of them dropped to the ground with exhaustion, he was beaten with a rifle butt. When another stopped for a break, she was kicked until she ran again, or prodded with a bayonet, to the accompaniment of lewd shouts and laughs. When one tried to escape or disobeyed an order, he was shot.

For those forced to handle the rotting corpses, death by disease often followed soon after.

Few victors, from Eisenhower down, seemed to notice, and fewer seemed to care, that conditions similar to the camps existed throughout much of Germany. Because of the almost total paralysis of the Reich's roads and rails caused by around-the-clock air attacks, supplies of food, fuel, clothes, and medicine had thinned to a trickle in German towns and cities and dried up almost entirely at the concentration camps. As a consequence, thousands of camp inmates swiftly succumbed in the final weeks of the war to typhus, dysentery, tuberculosis, starvation, and neglect. When pressed by a friend if there had indeed been a deliberate policy of starvation, one of the few guards lucky enough to escape another camp protested:

'It wasn't like that, believe me; it wasn't like that! I'm maybe the only survivor who can witness to how it really was, but who would believe me!'

'Is it all a lie?'
'Yes and no,' he said. 'I can only say what I know about our camp. The final weeks were horrible. No more rations came, no more medical supplies. The people got ill, they lost weight, and it kept getting more and more difficult to keep order. Even our own people lost their nerve in this extreme situation. But do you think we would have held out until the end to hand the camp over in an orderly fashion if we had been these murderers?'

As American forces swept through Bavaria toward Munich in late April, most German guards at the concentration camp near Dachau fled. To maintain order and arrange an orderly transfer of the 32,000 prisoners to the Allies, and despite signs at the gate warning, NO ENTRANCE— TYPHUS EPIDEMIC, several hundred German soldiers were ordered to the prison.

When American units under Lt. Col. Felix Sparks liberated Dachau the following day, the GIs were horrified by what they saw. Outside the prison were rail cars brim full with diseased and starved corpses. Inside the camp, Sparks found "a room piled high with naked and emaciated corpses. As I turned to look over the prison yard with unbelieving eyes, I saw a large number of dead inmates lying where they had fallen in the last few hours or days before our arrival. Since all the many bodies were in various stages of decomposition, the stench of death was overpowering."

The Dachau Massacre

Unhinged by the nightmare surrounding him, Sparks turned his equally enraged troops loose on the hapless German soldiers. While one group of over three hundred were led away to an enclosure, other disarmed soldiers were murdered in the guard towers, the barracks, or chased through the streets. US Army chaplain, Captain Leland Loy:

[A] German guard came running toward us. We grabbed him and were standing there talking to him when... [a GI] came up with a tommy-gun. He grabbed the prisoner, whirled him around and said, 'There you are you son-ofa-bitch!!' The man was only about three feet from us, but the soldier cut him down with his sub-machine gun. I shouted at him, 'what did you do that for, he was a prisoner?' He looked at me and screamed 'Gotta kill em, gotta kill em.' When I saw the look in his eyes and the machine gun waving in the air, I said to my men, 'Let him go.'

"[T]he men were deliberately wounding guards," recalled one US soldier. "A lot of guards were shot in the legs so they couldn't move. They were then turned over to the inmates. One was beheaded with a bayonet. Others were ripped apart limb by limb."

While the tortures were in progress, Lt. Jack Bushyhead forced nearly 350 prisoners up against a wall, planted two machine-guns, then ordered his men to open fire. Those still alive when the fusillade ended were forced to stand amid the carnage while the machine-gunners reloaded. A short time later, army surgeon Howard Buechner happened on the scene:

Lt. Bushyhead was standing on the flat roof of a low building.... Beside him one or more soldiers manned a .30 caliber machine gun. Opposite this building was a long, high cement and brick wall. At the base of the wall lay row on row of German soldiers, some dead, some dying, some possibly feigning death. Three or four inmates of the camp, dressed in striped clothing, each with a .45 caliber pistol in hand, were walking along the line.… As they passed down the line, they systematically fired a round into the head of each one.

"At the far end of the line of dead or dying soldiers," Buechner continued, "a small miracle was taking place."

The inmates who were delivering the coup de grace had not yet reached this point and a few guards who were still alive were being placed on litters by German medics. Under the direction of a German doctor, the litter bearers were carrying these few soldiers into a nearby hospital for treatment.

I approached this officer and attempted to offer my help. Perhaps he did not realize that I was a doctor since I did not wear red cross insignia. He obviously could not understand my words and probably thought that I wanted him to give up his patients for execution. In any event, he waved me away with his hand and said 'Nein,' 'Nein,' 'Nein.'

Despite his heroics and the placing of his own life in mortal danger, the doctor's efforts were for naught. The wounded men were soon seized and murdered, as was every other German in the camp.

"We shot everything that moved," one GI bragged. "We got all the bastards," gloated another.
In all, over five hundred helpless German soldiers were

slaughtered in cold blood. As a final touch, Lt. Col. Sparks forced the citizens of Dachau to bury the thousands of corpses in the camp, thereby assuring the death of many from disease.

Though perhaps the worst, the incident at Dachau was merely one of many massacres committed by US troops. Unaware of the deep hatred the Allies harbored for them, when proud SS units surrendered they naively assumed that they would be respected as the unsurpassed fighters that they undoubtedly were. Lt. Hans Woltersdorf was recovering in a German military hospital when US forces arrived.

Those who were able stood at the window, and told those of us who were lying down what was going on. A motorcycle with sidecar, carrying an officer and two men from the Waffen-SS, had arrived. They surrendered their weapons and the vehicle. The two men were allowed to continue on foot, but the officer was led away by the Americans. They accompanied him part of the way, just fifty meters on. Then a salvo from submachine guns was heard. The three Americans returned, alone.

'Did you see that? They shot the lieutenant! Did you see that? They're shooting all the Waffen-SS officers!' That had to be a mistake! Why? Why?

Our comrades from the Wehrmacht didn't stand around thinking for long. They went down to the hospital's administrative quarters, destroyed all files that showed that we belonged to the Waffen-SS, started new medical sheets for us with Wehrmacht ranks, got us Wehrmacht uniforms, and assigned us to new Wehrmacht units.

Such stratagems seldom succeeded, however, since SS soldiers had their blood-type tattooed under the left arm.

"Again and again," continues Woltersdorf, "Americans invaded the place and gathered up groups of people who had to strip to the waist and raise their left arm. Then we saw some of them being shoved on to trucks with rifle butts."

When French forces under Jacques-Philippe Leclerc captured a dozen French SS near Karlstein, the general sarcastically asked one of the prisoners why he was wearing a German uniform.

"You look very smart in your *American* uniform, General," replied the boy.
In a rage, Leclerc ordered the twelve captives shot.
"All refused to have their eyes bandaged," a priest on the scene noted, and all bravely fell crying "Vive la France!"
Although SS troops were routinely slaughtered upon surrender, anyone wearing a German uniform was considered lucky if they were merely slapped, kicked, then marched to the rear. "Before they could be properly put in jail," wrote a witness when a group of little boys were marched past, "American GIs...fell on them and beat them bloody, just because they had German uniforms."
After relatively benign treatment by the British, Guy Sajer and other Landsers were transferred to the Americans. They were, said Sajer, "tall men with plump, rosy cheeks, who behaved like hooligans."

Their bearing was casual.... Their uniforms were made of soft cloth, like golfing clothes, and they moved their jaws continuously, like ruminating animals. They seemed neither happy nor unhappy, but indifferent to their victory, like men who are performing their duties in a state of partial consent, without any real enthusiasm for them. From our filthy, mangy ranks, we watched them with curiosity.... They seemed rich in everything but joy....

The Americans also humiliated us as much as they could.... They put us in a camp with only a few large tents, which could shelter barely a tenth of us.... In the center of the camp, the Americans ripped open several large cases filled with canned food. They spread the cans onto the ground with a few kicks, and walked away.... The food was so delicious that we forgot about the driving rain, which had turned the ground into a sponge....

From their shelters, the Americans watched us and talked about us. They probably despised us for flinging ourselves so readily into such elementary concerns, and thought us cowards for accepting the circumstances of captivity.... We were not in the least like the German troops in the documentaries our charming captors had probably been shown before leaving their homeland. We provided them with no reasons for anger; we were not the arrogant, irascible Boches, but simply underfed men standing in the rain, ready to eat unseasoned canned food; living dead, with anxiety stamped on our faces, leaning against any support, half asleep on our feet; sick and wounded, who didn't ask for treatment, but seemed content simply to sleep for long hours, undisturbed. It was clearly depressing for these crusading missionaries to find so much humility among the vanquished.

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While the occupation of Germany was in progress during the spring of 1945, a horror unimaginable was transpiring in Czechoslovakia. On May 5, when rumors swept through Prague that US forces were only seven miles away, the citizens of the Czech capital rose up against the Nazi occupation. Before the day was out most of the German garrison had been isolated and surrounded.

Meanwhile, the roundup of prisoners, including many refugees, began. Years of pent hatred for the German minority in their midst now had a free hand among the population. Wrote Juergen Thorwald:

Crowds of Czechs awaited the transports of German prisoners in the streets to pelt them with stones, spit into their faces, and beat them with any object that came to hand. German women, children, and men ran the gauntlet, with arms over their heads, to reach the prison gates under a hail of blows and kicks. Women of every age were dragged from the groups, their heads were shaved, their faces smeared with paint, and swastikas were drawn on their bared backs and breasts. Many were violated, others forced to open their mouth to the spittle of their torturers.

On May 9, with the fighting ended, the mob turned its attention to the thousands of Germans locked in prisons. "Several trucks loaded with German wounded and medical personnel drove into the [prison] court," Thorwald continues. "The wounded, the nurses, the doctors had just climbed from their vehicles when suddenly a band of insurgents appeared from the street and pounced upon them. They tore away their crutches, canes, and bandages, knocked them to the ground, and with clubs, poles, and hammers hit them until the Germans lay still."
"So began a day as evil as any known to history,"

muttered Thorwald.

In the street, crowds were waiting for those who were marched out of their prisons.... [T]hey had come equipped with everything their aroused passions might desire, from hot pitch to garden shears.... They ... grabbed Germans—and not only SS men—drenched them with gasoline, strung them up with their feet upper-most, set them on fire, and watched their agony, prolonged by the fact that in their position the rising heat and smoke did not suffocate them. They...tied German men and women together with barbed wire, shot into the bundles, and rolled them down into the Moldau River.... They beat every German until he lay still on the ground, forced naked women to remove the barricades, cut the tendons of their heels, and laughed at their writhing. Others they kicked to death.

"At the corner opening onto Wasser Street," said Czech, Ludek Pachmann, "hung three naked corpses, mutilated beyond recognition, their teeth entirely knocked out, their mouths nothing but bloody holes. Others had to drag their dead fellow-Germans into Stefans Street.... 'Those are your brothers, kiss them!' And so the still-living Germans, lips pressed tightly together, had to kiss their dead."

As he tried to escape the city, Gert Rainer, a German soldier disguised as a priest, saw sights that seemed straight from hell:

[A] sobbing young woman was kneeling, showering kisses on a child in her arms.... The child's eyes had been gouged out, and a knife still protruded from his abdomen. The woman's torn clothing and disheveled hair indicated that she had fought like a fury. Lost in her sorrow, she had not noticed the approaching stranger. He bent down to her and put her in mind that she had better not stay here. She was in danger of being shot herself.

'But that's what I want!' she suddenly cried. 'I don't want to go on living without my little Peter!'
When the truck started, the spectators fell into a frenzy of hatred.... The five captives were pulled along by ropes some 60 feet long. As yet they could keep up with the truck. But the more the driver picked up speed, the more it became impossible for them to keep on their feet. One after the other fell, jerked forward, and was dragged along at ever-increasing speed. After but a few rounds, the Germans were mangled beyond recognition. One single lump of blood, flesh and dirt comprised the pitiful haul of this chariot of bestiality.

In their sadistic ecstasy, people turned public mass murder into a folk festival.... Five young women had been tied to an advertising pillar, the rope wrapped about them several times. Their seven children had been packed into a gutter of sorts at their feet.... [A] Czech woman, perhaps 50 years of age, was pouring gasoline over the tied-up mothers. Others were spitting in their faces, slapping them and tearing whole fistfuls of hair. Then the oldest of them, laughing frenetically, lit a newspaper and ran around the pillar holding the burning paper to the gasoline-soaked victims. Like a flash, the pillar and the five others disappeared in flames several meters high.... The spectators had not noticed that one of the burning Germans had torn through the charring rope and thrown herself into the flames that licked up through the grating. With strength borne of a courage beyond death, she lifted out the grating and, lying on her stomach, tried to reach down into the tangle of blazing children. Lifeless, she lay in the flames.

In the meantime, the other four women, on fire from their feet to their hair, had slumped down as the common support of the rope was gone. That was the cue for their murderers to begin dancing around the pillar, cheering and rejoicing. The howling of the butchers grew even louder.

On Wenzels Square there was not one lamp-post without a German soldier strung up from it. The majority of them had been war-injured... A crowd literally jumping for joy surrounded an arena-like clearing, in the center of which two men held a stark-naked young German woman. Each of her breasts had been pierced with a large safety-pin, from which Iron Crosses were hung. A rod bearing a swastika flag at one end had been stabbed through her navel.... A naked German lay motionless beside her trampled child. She had been beaten to death. A gaping head wound revealed her brain, oozing out.

Several men had been dragged down from a Wehrmacht truck. Their hands were tied, the other end of the rope fastened to the hitch beneath the back end of the truck.... A young Czech climbed into the driver's seat.

At the huge sports stadium, thousands of Germans were herded onto the field to provide amusement for a laughing, howling audience. "Before our very eyes... [they] were tortured to death in every conceivable way," remembered Josefine Waimann. "Most deeply branded on my memory is the pregnant woman whose belly...uniformed Czechs slashed open, ripped out the fetus and then, howling with glee, stuffed a dachshund into

the torn womb of the woman, who was screaming dreadfully.... The slaughter happening in the arena before our very eyes was like that in ancient Rome."

The horror born at Prague soon spread to the rest of Czechoslovakia, particularly the Sudentland, where Germans had lived for over seven centuries.

"Take everything from the Germans," demanded Czech president, Edvard Benes, "leave them only a handkerchief to sob into!"

"You may kill Germans, it's no sin," cried a priest to a village mob. At Bilna, wrote a chronicler.…

Men and women were rounded up in the market square, had to strip naked and were made to walk single-file while being beaten by the population with whips and canes. Then...the men had to crawl on all fours, like dogs, one behind the other, during which they were beaten until they lost control of their bowels; each had to lick the excrement off the one in front of him. This torture continued until many of them had been beaten to death.... What was done to the women there simply cannot be described, the sadistic monstrousness of it is simply too great for words.

"When I passed through Czechoslovakia after the collapse," one German soldier recalled, "I saw severed human heads lining window sills, and in one butcher's shop naked corpses were hanging from the meat hooks."

When the fury had finally spent itself in Czechoslovakia, over 200,000 people had been butchered. Similar purges of German minorities occurred in Rumania, Hungary and Yugoslavia where men, women and children, by the hundreds of thousands, were massacred in cold blood. The slaughter throughout Europe was not confined to ethnic Germans alone. Following the Allied occupation of France, over 100,000 French citizens were murdered by their countrymen because of collaboration with the Germans or anti-communist activities. Similar, though smaller, and less bestial, reckonings took place in Belgium, Holland, Denmark, and Norway.

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"It just wasn't human," an American GI said simply of the forced repatriation to the Soviet Union of millions of antiCommunist Russians and Ukrainians after the war.

Well aware that some grim details from "Operation Keelhaul" were bound to surface, Allied leaders were quick to squash rumors and reassure the public. "[T]he United States Government has taken a firm stand against any forced repatriation and will continue to maintain this position ...," solemnly assuaged a spokesman for the War Department long after most of the Russian returnees had been slaughtered or enslaved in Stalin's USSR. "There is no intention that any refugee be returned home against his will."

To do otherwise, General Eisenhower later chimed, "would ... violate the fundamental humanitarian principles we espoused."

Even as he was soothing public concern over Russian repatriation, Eisenhower's "humanitarian principles" were hard at work in the numerous American death camps.

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"God, I hate the
Germans," the Supreme
Allied Commander had
written his wife in 1944.
As Mrs. Eisenhower and
anyone else close to the
general knew, Dwight
David Eisenhower's
loathing of all things
German was nothing

short of pathological.

With the final *Dwight D. Eisenhower* capitulation on May 8, the allied chief found himself in control of over five million ragged, weary, but living, enemy soldiers. "It is a pity we could not have killed more," muttered the general, dissatisfied with the body-count of the greatest blood-bath in human history. And so, Eisenhower settled for next best: If he could not kill armed Germans in war, he would kill disarmed Germans in peace. Because the Geneva Convention guaranteed POWs of signer nations the same food, shelter and medical attention as their captors, and because these laws were to be enforced by the International Red Cross, the American leader simply circumvented the treaty by creating his own category for prisoners. Under the general's reclassification, German soldiers were no longer considered POWs, but DEFs — Disarmed Enemy Forces. With this sleight-of-hand, and in direct violation of the Geneva Convention, Eisenhower could now deal in secret with those in his power, free from the prying eyes of the outside world.

Even before war's end, thousands of German POWs had died in American captivity from starvation, neglect or, in many cases, out-right murder. Wrote a survivor from one camp in April 1945:

Each group of ten was given the outdoor space of a medium-sized living room. We had to live like this for three months, no roof over our heads. Even the badly wounded only got a bundle of straw. And it rained on the Rhine for days. And we were always in the open. People died like flies. Then we got our first rations.... [W]e got one slice of bread for ten men. Each man got a tiny strip of that one slice.... And this went on for three long months. I only weighed 90 pounds. The dead were carried out every day. Then a voice would come over the loudspeaker: 'German soldiers, eat slowly. You haven't had anything to eat in a long time. When you get your rations today from the best fed army in the world, you'll die if you don't eat slowly.'

When two members of the US Army Medical Corp stumbled upon one of Eisenhower's death camps, they were horrified by what they saw:

Huddled close together for warmth, behind the barbed wire was a most awesome sight—nearly 100,000 haggard, apathetic, dirty, gaunt, blank-staring men clad in dirty field gray uniforms, and standing ankle-deep in mud.... The German Division Commander reported that the men had not eaten for at least two days, and the provision of water was a major problem—yet only 200 yards away was the River Rhine running bank full.

With German surrender and the threat of retaliation against Allied POWs entirely erased, deaths in the American camps accelerated dramatically. While tens of thousands died of starvation and thirst, hundreds of thousands more perished

American Death Camp

from overcrowding and disease. Said sixteen-year-old Hugo Stehkamper:

I only had a sweater to protect me from the pouring rain and the cold. There just wasn't any shelter to be had. You stood there, wet through and through, in fields that couldn't be called fields anymore—they were ruined. You had to make an effort when you walked to even pull your shoes out of the mud....

[I]t's incomprehensible to me how we could stand for many, many days without sitting, without lying down, just standing there, totally soaked. During the day we marched around, huddled together to try to warm each other a bit. At night we stood because we couldn't walk and tried to keep awake by singing or humming songs. Again and again someone got so tired his knees got weak and he collapsed.

Added a starving comrade from a camp near Remagen:

The latrines were just logs flung over ditches next to the barbed wire fences. To sleep, all we could do was to dig out a hole in the ground with our hands, then cling together in the hole.... Because of illness, the men had to defecate on the ground. Soon, many of us were too weak to take off our trousers first. So our clothing was infected, and so was the mud where we had to walk and sit and lie down. There was no water at all at first, except the rain....

We had to walk along between the holes of the soft earth thrown up by the digging, so it was easy to fall into a hole, but hard to climb out. The rain was almost constant along that part of the Rhine that spring. More than half the days we had rain. More than half the days we had no food at all. On the rest, we got a little K ration. I could see from the package that they were giving us one tenth of the rations that they issued to their own men.... I complained to the American camp commander that he was breaking the Geneva Convention, but he just said, 'Forget the Convention. You haven't any rights.'

Within a few days, some of the men who had gone healthy into the camps were dead. I saw our men dragging many dead bodies to the gate of the camp, where they were thrown loose on top of each other onto trucks, which took them away.

'The Americans were really shitty to us,' a survivor at another camp recalled. 'All we had to eat was grass.'

At Hans Woltersdorf 's prison, the inmates survived on a daily soup made of birdseed. NOT FIT FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION, read the words on the sacks. At another camp, a weeping seventeen-year-old stood day-in, day-out beside the barbed wire fence. In the distance, the youth could just view his own village. One morning, inmates awoke to find the boy dead, his body strung up by guards and left dangling on the wires. When outraged prisoners cried "Murderers! Murderers!" the camp commander withheld their meager rations for three days. "For us who were already starving and could hardly move because of weakness... it meant death," said one of the men.

"Civilians from nearby villages and towns were prevented at gun-point from passing food through the fence to prisoners," revealed another German from his camp near Ludwigshafen.

There was no lack of food or shelter among the victorious Allies. Indeed, American supply depots were bursting at the seams. "More stocks than we can ever use," one general announced. "[They] stretch as far as [the] eye can see." Instead of allowing even a trickle of this bounty to reach the compounds, the starvation diet was further reduced.

"Outside the camp the Americans were burning food which they could not eat themselves," said a starving Werner Laska from his prison.

Horrified by the silent, secret massacre, the International Red Cross—which had over 100,000 tons of food stored in Switzerland—tried to intercede. When two trains loaded with supplies reached the camps, however, they were turned back by American officers.

"These Nazis are getting a dose of their own medicine," a prison commandant reported proudly to one of Eisenhower's "political" advisors.

"German soldiers were not common law convicts," protested a Red Cross official, "they were drafted to fight in a national army on patriotic grounds and could not refuse military service any more than the Americans could."

Like this individual, many others found no justification whatsoever in the massacre of helpless prisoners, especially since the German government had lived up to the Geneva Convention, as one American put it, "to a tee."

"I have come up against few instances where Germans have not treated prisoners according to the rules, and respected the Red Cross," wrote war correspondent Allan Wood of the *London Express*.

"The Germans even in their greatest moments of despair obeyed the Convention in most respects," a US officer added. "True it is that there were front line atrocities—passions run high up there—but they were incidents, not practices; and maladministration of their American prison camps was very uncommon."
Nevertheless, despite the Red Cross report that ninetynine percent of American prisoners of war in Germany had survived and were on their way home, Eisenhower's murderous program continued apace. One officer who refused to have a hand in the crime and who began releasing large numbers of prisoners soon after they were disarmed was George Patton. Explained the general:

I emphasized [to the troops] the necessity for the proper treatment of prisoners of war, both as to their lives and property. My usual statement was... 'Kill all the Germans you can but do not put them up against a wall and kill them. Do your killing while they are still fighting. After a man has surrendered, he should be treated exactly in accordance with the Rules of Land Warfare, and just as you would hope to be treated if you were foolish enough to surrender. Americans do not kick people in the teeth after they are down.'

Although other upright generals such as Omar Bradley and J. C. H. Lee issued orders to release POWs, Eisenhower quickly overruled them. Mercifully, for the two million Germans under British control, Bernard Montgomery refused to participate in the massacre. Indeed, soon after war's end, the field marshal released and sent home most of his prisoners.

After being shuttled from one enclosure to the next, Corporal Helmut Liebich had seen for himself all the horrors the American death camps had to give. At one compound, amused guards formed lines and beat starving prisoners with clubs and sticks as they ran the gauntlet for their paltry rations. At another camp of 5,200 men, Liebich watched as ten to thirty bodies were hauled away every day. At yet another prison, there were "35 days of starvation and 15 days of no food at all," and what little the wretched inmates did receive was rotten. Finally, in June 1945, Liebich's camp at Rheinberg passed to British control. Immediately, survivors were given food and shelter and for those like Liebich—who now weighed 97 pounds and was dying of dysentery—swift medical attention was provided.

"It was wonderful to be under a roof in a real bed," the corporal reminisced. "We were treated like human beings again. The Tommies treated us like comrades."

Before the British could take complete control of the camp, however, Liebich noted that American bulldozers leveled one section of the compound where skeletal—but breathing—men still lay in their holes.

If possible, Germans in French hands suffered even more than those held by Americans. When France requested slaves as part of its war booty, Eisenhower transferred over 600,000 Germans east.

"Gee! I hope we don't ever lose a war," muttered one GI as he stared at the broken, starving wrecks being selected for slavery.

"When we marched through Namur in a column seven abreast, there was also a Catholic procession going through the street," remembered one slave as he moved through Belgium. "When the people saw the POWs, the procession dissolved, and they threw rocks and horse shit at us. From Namur, we went by train in open railroad cars. At one point we went under a bridge, and railroad ties were thrown from it into the cars filled with POWs, causing several deaths. Later we went under another overpass, and women lifted their skirts and relieved themselves on us."

Once in France, the assaults intensified. "[W]e were cursed, spat upon and even physically attacked by the French population, especially the women," Hans von der Heide wrote. "I bitterly recalled scenes from the spring of 1943, when we marched American POWs through the streets of Paris. They were threatened and insulted no differently by the French mob."

Like the Americans, the French starved their prisoners. Unlike the Americans, the French drained the last ounce of labor from their victims before they dropped dead. "I have seen them beaten with rifle butts and kicked with feet in the streets of the town because they broke down of overwork," remarked a witness from Langres. "Two or three of them die of exhaustion every week."

"In another camp," a horrified viewer added, "prisoners receive only one meal a day but are expected to continue working. Elsewhere so many have died recently that the cemetery space was exhausted and another had to be built."

Revealed the French journal, *Le Figaro*: "In certain camps for German prisoners of war ... living skeletons may be seen... and deaths from undernourishment are numerous. We learn that prisoners have been savagely and systematically beaten and that some have been employed in removing mines without protection equipment so that they have been condemned to die sooner or later."

"Twenty-five percent of the men in [our] camp died in one month," echoed a slave from Buglose.

The enslavement of German soldiers was not limited to France. Although fed and treated infinitely better, several hundred thousand POWs in Great Britain were transformed into virtual slaves. Wrote historian Ralph Franklin Keeling at the time:

The British Government nets over $250,000,000 annually from its slaves. The Government, which frankly calls itself the 'owner' of the prisoners, hires the men out to any employer needing men, charging the going rates of pay for such work —usually $15 to $20 per week. It pays the slaves from 10 cents to 20 cents a day ... plus such 'amenities' as slaves customarily received in the former days of slavery in the form of clothing, food, and shelter.

When prisoners were put to work raising projects for Britain's grand "Victory in Europe" celebration, one English foreman felt compelled to quip: "I guess the Jerries are preparing to celebrate their own down-fall. It does seem as though that is laying it on a bit thick."

In vain did the International Red Cross protest:

The United States, Britain, and France...are violating International Red Cross agreements they solemnly signed in 1929. Investigation at Geneva headquarters today disclosed that the transfer of German war prisoners captured by the American army to French and British authorities for forced labor is nowhere permitted in the statues of the International Red Cross, which is the highest authority on the subject in the world.

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Meanwhile, those Germans not consigned to bondage continued to perish in American prisons. Landsers who did not succumb to hunger or disease often died of thirst, even though streams sometimes ran just a few feet from the camps. "[T]he lack of water was the worst thing of all," remembered George Weiss of his enclosure where the Rhine flowed just beyond the barbed wire. "For three and a half days we had no water at all. We would drink our own urine. It tasted terrible, but what could we do? Some men got down on the ground and licked the ground to get some moisture. I was so weak I was already on my knees."

"[O]thers," observed American guard, Martin Brech, "tried to escape in a demented or suicidal fashion, running through open fields in broad daylight towards the Rhine to quench their thirst. They were mowed down."

As if their plight were not already hideous enough, prisoners occasionally became the targets of drunken and sadistic guards who sprayed the camps with machine-gun fire for sport. "I think...," Private Brech continued, "[that] soldiers not exposed to combat were trying to prove how tough they were by taking it out on the prisoners and civilians."

I encountered a captain on a hill above the Rhine shooting down at a group of German civilian women with his .45 caliber pistol. When I asked, 'Why?' he mumbled, 'Target practice,' and fired until his pistol was empty.... This is when I realized I was dealing with cold-blooded killers filled with moralistic hatred.

While continuing to deny the Red Cross and other relief agencies access to the camps, Eisenhower stressed among his lieutenants the need for secrecy. "Ike made the sensational statement that ... now that hostilities were over, the important thing was to stay in with world public opinion—apparently whether it was right or wrong...,"

recorded George Patton. "After lunch [he] talked to us very confidentially on the necessity for solidarity in the event that any of us are called before a Congressional Committee."

To prevent the gruesome details from reaching the outside world—and sidetrack those that did—counterrumors were circulated stating that, far from mistreating and murdering prisoners, US camp commanders were actually turning back released Germans who tried to slip back in for food and shelter.

Ultimately, at least 800,000 German prisoners died in the American and French death camps. "Quite probably," one expert later wrote, the figure of one million is closer to the mark. And thus, in "peace," did ten times the number of Landsers die than were killed on the whole Western Front during the whole of the war.

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Unlike their democratic counterparts, the Soviet Union made little effort to hide from the world the fate of German prisoners in its hands. Toiling by the hundreds of thousands in the forests and mines of Siberia, the captives were slaves pure and simple and no attempt was made to disguise the fact. For the enslaved Germans, male and female, the odds of surviving the Soviet gulags were even worse than escaping the American or French death camps and a trip to Siberia was tantamount to a death sentence. What little food the slaves received was intended merely to maintain their strength so that the last drop of energy could be drained from them.

And so, with the once mighty Wehrmacht now disarmed and enslaved, and with their leaders either dead or awaiting trial for so-called "war crimes," the old men, women and children who remained in the dismembered Reich found themselves utterly at the mercy of the victors. Unfortunately for these survivors, never in the history of the world was mercy in shorter supply.

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Soon after the Allied victory in Europe, the purge of Nazi Party members from government, business, industry, science, education, and all other walks of German life commenced. While a surprising number of Nazis were allowed—even compelled—to man their posts temporarily to enable a smooth transition, all party members, high and low, were sooner or later excised from German daily life. In theory, "de-Nazification" was a simple transplanting of Nazi officials with those of democratic, socialist or communist underpinnings. In practice, the purge became little more than a cloak for an orgy of rape, torture and death.

De-Nazification

Because their knowledge of the language and culture was superb, most of the intelligence officers accompanying US and British forces into the Reich were Jewish refugees who had fled Nazi persecution in the late 1930s. Although their American and English "aides" were hardly better, the fact that many of these "39ers" became interrogators, examiners and screeners, with old scores to settle, insured that Nazis—or any German, for that matter—would be shown no mercy.

One man opposed to the vengeance-minded program was George Patton. "Evidently the virus started by [Henry] Morgenthau and [Bernard] Baruch of a Semitic revenge against all Germans is still working ...," wrote the general in private. "I am frankly opposed to this war-criminal stuff. It is not cricket and it is Semitic....I can't see how Americans can sink so low."

Soon after occupation, all adult Germans were compelled to register at the nearest Allied headquarters and complete a lengthy questionnaire on their past activities. While many nervous citizens were detained then and there, most returned home, convinced that at long last the terrible ordeal was over. For millions, however, the trial had but begun.

"Then it started," remembered Anna Fest, a woman who had registered with the Americans six weeks earlier.

Such a feeling of helplessness, when three or four heavily armed military police stand in front of you. You just panic. I cried terribly. My mother was completely beside herself and said, 'You can't do this. She registered just as she was supposed to.' Then she said, 'If only you'd gone somewhere else and had hidden.' But I consider that senseless, because I did not feel guilty.... That was the way it went with everyone, with no reason given.

Few German adults, Nazi or not, escaped the dreaded knock on the door. Far from being dangerous fascists, Freddy and Lali Horstmann were actually well-known antiNazis. Records Lali from the Russian Zone:

'I am sorry to bother you,' he began, 'but I am simply carrying out my orders. Until when did you work for the Foreign Office?'

'Till 1933,' my husband answered.
'Then you need fear nothing,' Androff said.... 'We accuse you of nothing, but we want you to accompany us to the headquarters of the NKVD, the secret police, so that we can take down what you said in a protocol, and ask you a few questions about the working of the Foreign Office....'
We were stunned for a moment; then I started forward, asking if I could come along with them. 'Impossible,' the interpreter smiled. My heart raced. Would Freddy answer satisfactorily? Could he stand the excitement? What sort of accommodation would they give him?
'Don't worry, your husband has nothing to fear,' Androff continued. 'He will have a heated room. Give him a blanket for the night, but quickly, we must leave….'
There was a feeling of sharp tension, putting the soldier on his guard, as though he were expecting an attack from one of us. I took first the soldier, then the interpreter, by their hands and begged them to be kind to Freddy, repeating myself in the bustle and scraping of feet that drowned my words. There was a banging of doors. A cold wind blew in. I felt Freddy kiss me. I never saw him again.

"[W]e were wakened by the sound of tires screeching, engines stopping abruptly, orders yelled, general din, and a hammering on the window shutters. Then the intruders broke through the door, and we saw Americans with rifles who stood in front of our bed and shone lights at us. None of them spoke German, but their gestures said: 'Get dressed, come with us immediately.' This was my fourth arrest."

So wrote Leni Riefenstahl, a talented young woman who was perhaps the world's greatest film-maker. Because her epic documentaries— *Triumph of the Will* and *Olympia*—seemed paeans to not only Germany, but National Socialism, and because of her close relationship with an admiring Adolf Hitler, Leni was of more than passing interest to the Allies. Though false, rumors also hinted that the attractive, sometimes-actress was also a "mistress of the devil"—that she and Hitler were lovers.

"Neither my husband nor my mother nor any of my three assistants had ever joined the Nazi Party, nor had any of us been politically active," said the confused young woman. "No charges had ever been filed against us, yet we were at the mercy of the [Allies] and had no legal protection of any kind."

Soon after Leni's fourth arrest, came a fifth.

The jeep raced along the autobahns until, a few hours later ... I was brought to the Salzburg Prison; there an elderly prison matron rudely pushed me into the cell, kicking me so hard that I fell to the ground; then the door was locked. There were two other women in the dark, barren room, and one of them, on her knees, slid about the floor, jabbering confusedly; then she began to scream, her limbs writhing hysterically. She seemed to have lost her mind. The other woman crouched on her bunk, weeping to herself.

As Leni and others quickly discovered, the "softening up" process began soon after arrival at an Allied prison. When Ernst von Salomon, his Jewish girl friend and fellow prisoners reached an American holding pen near Munich,

Leni Riefenstahl

the men were promptly led into a room and brutally beaten by military police. With his teeth knocked out and blood spurting from his mouth, von Salomon moaned to a gumchewing officer, "You are no gentlemen." The remark brought only a roar of laughter from the attackers. "No, no, no!" the GIs grinned. "We are Mississippi boys!" In another room, military policemen raped the women at will while leering soldiers watched from windows.

After such savage treatment, the feelings of despair only intensified once the captives were crammed into cells.

"The people had been standing there for three days, waiting to be interrogated," remembered a German physician ordered to treat prisoners in the Soviet Zone. "At the sight of us a pandemonium broke out which left me helpless.... As far as I could gather, the usual senseless questions were being reiterated: Why were they there, and for how long? They had no water and hardly anything to eat. They wanted to be let out more often than once a day.... A great many of them have dysentery so badly that they can no longer get up."
"Young Poles made fun of us," said a woman from her cell in the same zone. "[They] threw bricks through the windows, paperbags with sand, and skins of hares filled with excrement. We did not dare to move or offer resistance, but huddled together in the farthest corner, in order not to be hit, which could not always be avoided. … [W]e were never free from torments."
"For hours on end I rolled about on my bed, trying to forget my surroundings," recalled Leni Riefenstahl, "but it was impossible."

The mentally disturbed woman kept screaming—all through the night; but even worse were the yells and shrieks of men from the courtyard, men who were being beaten, screaming like animals. I subsequently found out that a company of SS men was being interrogated.

They came for me the next morning, and I was taken to a padded cell where I had to strip naked, and a woman examined every square inch of my body. Then I had to get dressed and go down to the courtyard, where many men were standing, apparently prisoners, and I was the only woman. We had to line up before an American guard who spoke German. The prisoners stood to attention, so I tried to do the same, and then an American came who spoke fluent German. He pushed a few people together, then halted at the first in our line.

Were you in the Party?
The prisoner hesitated for a moment, then said:
Yes.
He was slugged in the face and spat blood. The American went on to the next in line.
Were you in the Party?
The man hesitated.
Yes or no?
Yes.
And he too got punched so hard in the face that the blood ran out of his mouth. However, like the first man, he didn't dare resist. They didn't even instinctively raise their hands to protect themselves. They did nothing. They put up with the blows like dogs.
The next man was asked:
Were you in the Party?
Silence.
Well?
No! He yelled, so no punch. From then on
nobody admitted that he had been in the Party
and I was not even asked.

As the above case illustrated, there often was no rhyme or reason to the examinations; all seemed designed to force from the victim what the inquisitor wanted to hear, whether true or false. Additionally, most such "interrogations" were structured to inflict as much pain and suffering as possible. Explained one prisoner:

The purpose of these interrogations is not to worm out of the people what they knew—which would be uninteresting anyway—but to extort from them special statements. The methods resorted to are extremely primitive; people are beaten up until they confess to having been members of the Nazi Party.... The authorities simply assume that, basically, everybody has belonged to the Party. Many people die during and after these interrogations, while others, who admit at once their party membership, are treated more leniently.

"A young commissar, who was a great hater of the Germans, cross-examined me....," said Gertrude Schulz. "When he put the question: 'Frauenwerk [Women's Labor Service]?' I answered in the negative. Thereupon he became so enraged, that he beat me with a stick, until I was black and blue. I received about 15 blows...on my left upper arm, on my back and on my thigh. I collapsed and, as in the case of the first cross-examination, I had to sign the questionnaire."

"Both officers who took our testimony were former German Jews," reminisced a member of the women's SS, Anna Fest. While vicious dogs snarled nearby,

American torture pen

one of the officers screamed questions and accusations at Anna. If the answers were not those desired, "he kicked me in the back and the other hit me."

They kept saying we must have been armed, have had pistols or so. But we had no weapons, none of us.... I had no pistol. I couldn't say, just so they'd leave me in peace, yes, we had pistols. The same thing would happen to the next person to testify.... [T]he terrible thing was, the German men had to watch. That was a horrible, horrible experience.... That must have been terrible for them. When I went outside, several of them stood there with tears running down their cheeks. What could they have done? They could do nothing.

Not surprisingly, with beatings, rape, torture, and death facing them, few victims failed to "confess" and most gladly inked their name to any scrap of paper shown them. Some, like Anna, tried to resist. Such recalcitrance was almost always of short duration, however. Generally, after enduring blackened eyes, broken bones, electric shock to breasts—or, in the case of men, smashed testicles—only those who died during torture failed to sign confessions.

Alone, surrounded by sadistic hate, utterly bereft of law, many victims understandably escaped by taking their own lives. Like tiny islands in a vast sea of evil, however, miracles did occur. As he limped painfully back to his prison cell, one Wehrmacht officer reflected on the insults, beatings, and tortures he had endured and contemplated suicide.

I could not see properly in the semi-darkness and missed my open cell door. A kick in the back and I was sprawling on the floor. As I raised myself I said to myself I could not, should not accept this humiliation. I sat on my bunk. I had hidden a razor blade that would serve to open my veins. Then I looked at the New Testament and found these words in the Gospel of St. John: 'Without me ye can do nothing.'

Yes. You can mangle this poor body—I looked down at the running sores on my legs—but myself, my honor, God's image that is in me, you cannot touch. This body is only a shell, not my real self. Without Him, without the Lord, my Lord, ye can do nothing. New strength seemed to rise in me.

I was pondering over what seemed to me a miracle when the heavy lock turned in the cell door. A very young American soldier came in, put his finger to his lips to warn me not to speak. 'I saw it,' he said. 'Here are baked potatoes.' He pulled the potatoes out of his pocket and gave them to me, and then went out, locking the door behind him.

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Horrific as de-Nazification was in the British, French and, especially the American Zone, it was nothing compared to what took place in Poland, behind Soviet lines. In hundreds of concentration camps sponsored by an apparatus called the "Office of State Security," thousands of Germans— male and female, old and young, high and low, Nazi and non–Nazi, SS, Wehrmacht, Volkssturm, Hitler Youth, all—were rounded up and imprisoned. Staffed and run by Jews, with help from Poles, Czechs, Russians, and other concentration camp survivors, the prisons were little better than torture chambers where

dying was a thing to be prolonged, not hastened. While those with blond hair, blue eyes and handsome features were first to go, anyone who spoke German would do.

Moments after arrival, prisoners were made horrifyingly aware of their fate. John Sack, himself a Jew, reports on one camp run by twenty-six-year-old Shlomo Morel:

'I was at Auschwitz,' Shlomo proclaimed, lying to the Germans but, even more, to himself, psyching himself like a fighter the night of the championship, filling himself with hate for the Germans around him. 'I was at Auschwitz for six long years, and I swore that if I got out, when the sweat-drenched invaders cried, 'Pigs! We will fix you up!' and left the Germans alone.

I'd pay all you Nazis back.' His eyes sent spears, but the 'Nazis' sent him a look of simple bewilderment.… 'Now sing the Horst Wessel Song!' No one did, and Shlomo, who carried a hard rubber club, hit it against a bed like some judge's gavel. 'Sing it, I say!'

' *The flags held high* ...,' some Germans began. 'Everyone!' Shlomo said.
'*The ranks closed tight....*'
'I said everyone!'
'Blond!'
Shlomo cried to the blondest, bluest-eyed person

there. 'I said sing!' He swung his rubber club at the man's golden head and hit it. The man staggered back. '*Our comrades, killed by the Reds and Reactionaries…'*
'Sonofabitch!' Shlomo cried, enraged that the man was defying him by not singing but staggering back. He hit him again, saying, 'Sing!'
'Are marching in spirit with us...'
'Louder!'
'*Clear the street for the Brown Battalions...*'
'Still louder!' cried Shlomo, hitting another shouting man....
'*Millions of hopeful people...*'
'Nazi pigs!'
'*Are looking to the swastika...*'
'Schweine!' Shlomo cried. He threw down his rubber club, grabbed a wooden stool, and, a leg in his fist, started beating a German's head. Without thinking, the man raised his arms, and Shlomo, enraged that the man would try to evade his just punishment, cried, "Sonofawhore!" and slammed the stool against the man's chest. The man dropped his arms, and Shlomo started hitting his now undefended head when snap! the leg of the stool split off, and, cursing the German birchwood, he grabbed another stool and hit the German with that. No one was singing now, but Shlomo, shouting, didn't notice. The other guards called out, 'Blond!' 'Black!' 'Short!' 'Tall!' and as each of these terrified people came up, they wielded their clubs upon him. The brawl went on till eleven o'clock,

Some were quite fixed…Shlomo and his subordinates had killed them.

The next night it was more of the same...and the next night and the next and the next. Those who survived the "welcoming committee" at this and other camps were flung back into their pens.

"I was put with 30 women into a cell, which was intended to accommodate one person," Gerlinde Winkler recalled. "The narrow space, into which we were rammed, was unbearable and our legs were all entangled together.…The women, ill with dysentery, were only allowed to go out once a day, in order to relieve themselves. A bucket without

a cover was pushed into the cell with the remark: ‘Here you have one, you German sows.’ The stink was insupportable, and we were not allowed to open the little window."

"The air in the cells became dense, the smell of the excrement filled it, the heat was like in Calcutta, and the flies made the ceiling black," wrote John Sack. "*I’m choking*, the Germans thought, and one even took the community razor blade and, in despair, cut his throat open with it."

When the wretched inmates were at last pried from their hellish tombs, it was only for interrogation. Sack continues:

As many as eight interrogators, almost all Jews, stood around any one German saying, ‘Were you in the Nazi Party?’ Sometimes a German said, ‘Yes,’ and the boys shouted, ‘Du schwein! You pig!’ and beat him and broke his arm, perhaps, before sending him to his cell.… But usually a German said, ‘No,’ and the boys...told him, ‘You’re lying. You were a Nazi.’

‘No, I never was.’
‘You’re lying! We know about you!’
and to use it to cram some rags in the German’s mouth. Then they resumed beating him.... The more the man contradicted them, the more they hated him for it.

‘No, I really wasn’t—’
‘Du lugst! You’re lying!’ they
cried, hitting the obstinate man.
‘You better admit it! Or you’ll get
a longer sentence! Now! Were you
in the Nazi Party?’
‘No!’ the German often said,
and the boys had to beat him and
beat him until he was really crying,
‘I was a Nazi! Yes!’
But sometimes a German

wouldn't confess. One such hard*Shlomo Morel*case was a fifty-year-old....

'Were you in the Party?'
'No, I wasn't in it.'
'How many people work for you?'
'In the high season, thirty-five.'
'You must have been in the Party,' the boy deduced. He asked for the German's wallet, where he found a

fishing license with the stamp of the German Anglers Association. Studying it, he told the German, 'It's stamped by the Party.'

'It's not,' said the German.

He'd lost his left arm in World War I and was using his right arm to gesture with, and, to the boy, he may have seemed to be Heiling Hitler. The boy became violent. He grabbed the man's collar, hit the man's head against the wall, hit it against it ten times more, threw the man's body onto the floor, and, in his boots, jumped on the man's cringing chest as though jumping rope. A half dozen other interrogators, almost all Jews, pushed the man onto a couch, pulled off his trousers, and hit him with hard rubber clubs and hard rubber hoses full of stones. The sweat started running down the Jews' arms, and the blood down the man's naked legs.

‘Warst du in der Partei?’
‘Nein!’
‘Warst du in der Partei?’
‘Nein!’ the German screamed—screamed, till the

boys had to go to Shlomo’s kitchen for a wooden spoon
After undergoing similar sessions on a regular basis, the victim was brought back for the eighth time.

By now, the man was half unconscious due to his many concussions, and he wasn’t thinking clearly. The boys worked on him with rubber and oak-wood clubs and said, ‘Do you still say you weren’t in the Party?’

‘No! I didn’t say I wasn’t in the Party’
‘You didn’t?’
‘No!’ said the punch drunk man. ‘I never said it!’ ‘You were in the Party?’
‘Yes!’
The boys stopped beating him. They practically

sighed, as if their ordeal were over now. They lit up cigarettes....

‘Scram,’ one said to the German. The man stood up, and he had his hand on the doorknob when one of the boys impulsively hit the back of his head, and he fell to the floor, unconscious.

‘Aufstehen, du Deutsches schwein. Stand up, you German pig,’ the boys said, kicking him till he stood up and collapsed again. Two boys carried him to his cell and dropped him in a corner....

Of course, the boys would beat up the Germans for ‘Yes’es as well as ‘No’s. In Glatz, the Jewish commandant asked a German policeman, ‘Were you in the Party?’

‘Of course! I was obliged to be!’
‘Lie down,’ the commandant said, and six weeks later the boys were still whipping the German’s feet. Some torture sessions lacked even the pretense of an examination. Remembered Eva Reimann:

My cell door opened. The guard, who, because of the foul smell, held a handkerchief to his nose, cried, ‘Reimann Eva! Come!’ I was led to a first-floor room.

He shouted at me, ‘Take off your shoes!’ I took them off. ‘Lie down!’ I lay down. He took a thick bamboo stick, and he beat the soles of my feet. I screamed, since the pain was very great.... The stick whistled down on me. A blow on my mouth tore my lower lip, and my teeth started bleeding violently. He beat my feet again. The pain was unbearable....

The door opened suddenly, and, smiling obligingly, a cigarette in his mouth, in came the chief of the Office, named Sternnagel. In faultless German he asked me, “What’s wrong here? Why do you let yourself be beaten? You just have to sign this document. Or should we jam your fingers in the door, until the bones are broad...?

A man picked me up by the ankles, raised me eight inches above the floor, and let me fall. My hands were tied, and my head hit hard.... I lay in a bloody puddle. Someone cried, ‘Stand up!’ I tried to, and, with unspeakable pain, I succeeded. A man with a pistol came, held it to my left temple, and said, ‘Will you now confess?’ I told him, ‘Please shoot me.’ Yes, I hoped to be freed from all his tortures. I begged him, ‘Please pull the trigger.’

After barely surviving his "interrogation," one fourteenyear-old was taken to the camp infirmary. "My body was green, but my legs were fire red," the boy said. "My wounds were bound with toilet paper, and I had to change the toilet paper every day. I was in the

perfect place to watch what went on.... All the patients were beaten people, and they died everywhere: at their beds, in the washroom, on the toilet. At night, I had to step over the dead as if that were normal to do."

When the supply of victims ran low, it was a simple matter to find more. John Sack:

One day, a German in pitch-black pants, the SS's color, showed up in Lola's prison. He'd been spotted near the city square by a Pole who'd said, 'Fascist! You're wearing black!' At that, the German had bolted off, but the Pole chased him a mile to the Church of Saints Peter and Paul, tackled him by a gold mosaic, hit him, kicked him, and took him to Lola's prison. Some guards, all girls, then seized the incriminating evidence: the man's black pants, pulling them off so aggressively that one of the tendons tore. The man screamed, but the girls said, 'Shut up!' and they didn't recognize that the pants were part of a boy scout uniform. The 'man' was fourteen years old.

The girls decided to torture him [with]...fire. They held down the German boy, put out their cigarettes on him, and, using gasoline, set his curly black hair afire.

At the larger prison camps, Germans died by the hundreds daily.

'You pigs!' the commandant then cried, and he beat the Germans with their stools, often killing them. At dawn many days, a Jewish guard cried, 'Eins! Zwei! Drei! Vier!' and marched the Germans into the woods outside their camp. 'Halt! Get your shovels! Dig!' the guard cried, and, when the Germans had dug a big grave, he put a picture of Hitler in. 'Now cry!' the guard said. 'And sing All the Dogs Are Barking!' and all the Germans moaned,

All the dogs are barking, All the dogs are barking, Just the little hot-dogs, Aren't barking at all.

The guard then cried, 'Get undressed!' and, when the Germans were naked, he beat them, poured liquid manure on them, or, catching a toad, shoved the fat thing down a German's throat, the German soon dying.

Utterly unhinged by years of persecution, by the loss of homes and loved ones, for the camp operators, no torture, no sadism, no bestiality, seemed too monstrous to inflict on those now in their power. Some Germans were forced to crawl on all fours and eat their own excrement as well as that of others. Many were drowned in open latrines. Hundreds were herded into buildings and burned to death or sealed in caskets and buried alive.

Near Lamsdorf, German women were forced to disinter bodies from a Polish burial site. According to John Sack:

The women did, and they started to suffer nausea as the bodies, black as the stuff in a gutter, appeared. The faces were rotten, the flesh was glue, but the guards—who had often seemed psychopathic, making a German woman drink urine, drink blood, and eat a man's excrement, inserting an oily five-mark bill in a woman's vagina, putting a match to it—shouted at the women…. 'Lie down with them!' The women did, and the guards shouted, 'Hug them!' 'Kiss them!' 'Make love with them!' and, with their rifles, pushed on the backs of the women's heads until their eyes, noses and mouths were deep in the Polish faces' slime. The women who clamped their lips couldn't scream, and the women who screamed had to taste something vile. Spitting, retching, the women at last stood up, the wet tendrils still on their chins, fingers, clothes, the wet seeping into the fibers, the stink like a mist around them as they marched back to Lamsdorf. There were no showers there, and the corpses had all had typhus, apparently, and sixty-four women...died.

Not surprisingly, the mortality rate at the concentration camps was staggering and relatively few survived. At one prison of eight thousand, a mere 1,500 lived to reach

home. And of those "lucky" individuals who did leave with their lives, few could any longer be called human.

When a smattering of accounts began to leak from Poland of the unspeakable crimes being committed, many in the West were stunned. "One would expect that after the horrors in Nazi concentration camps, nothing like that could ever happen again," muttered one US senator, who then reported on beatings, torture and "brains splashed on the ceiling."

"Is this what our soldiers died for?" echoed a Briton in the House of Commons.
Added Winston Churchill: "Enormous numbers [of Germans] are utterly unaccounted for. It is not impossible that tragedy on a prodigious scale is unfolding itself behind the Iron Curtain."
While Churchill and others in the West were expressing shock and surprise over the sadistic slaughter taking place in the Soviet Zone, precious little was said about the "tragedy on a prodigious scale" that was transpiring in their own backyard.

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Among the millions imprisoned by the Allies were thousands of Germans accused of having a direct or indirect hand in war crimes. Because the victorious powers demanded swift and severe punishment, Allied prosecutors were urged to get the most damning indictments in as little time as possible. Unfortunately for the accused, their captors seemed determined to inflict as much pain as possible in the process.

"[W]e were thrown into small cells stark naked," Hans Schmidt later wrote. "The cells in which three or four persons were incarcerated were six and a half by ten feet in size and had no windows or ventilation."

When we went to the lavatory we had to run through a lane of Americans who struck us with straps, brooms, cudgels, buckets, belts, and pistol holders to make us fall down. Our head, eyes, body, belly, and genitals were violently injured. A man stood inside the lavatory to beat us and spit on us. We returned to our cells through the same ordeal. The temperature in the cells was 140 Fahrenheit or more. During the first three days we were given only one cup of water and a small slice of bread. During the first days we perspired all the time, then perspiration stopped. We were kept standing chained

back to back for hours. We suffered terribly from thirst, blood stagnation and mortification of the hands. From time to time water was poured on the almost red-hot radiators, filling the cells with steam, so that we could hardly breathe. During all this time the cells were in darkness, except when the American soldiers entered and switched on electric bulbs...which forced us to close our eyes.

Our thirst became more and more cruel, so that our lips cracked, our tongues were stiff, and we eventually became apathetic, or raved, or collapsed.

After enduring this torture for several days, we were given a small blanket to cover our nakedness, and driven to the courtyard outside. The uneven soil was covered with pebbles and slag and we were again beaten and finally driven

back on our smashed and bleeding feet. While out of breath, burning cigarettes were pushed into our mouths, and each of us was forced to eat three or four of them. Meanwhile the American soldiers continued to hit us on eyes, head, and ears. Back in our cells we were pushed against burning radiators, so that our skin was blistered.

For thirteen days and nights we received the same treatment, tortured by heat and thirst. When we begged for water, our guards mocked us. When we fainted we were revived by being drenched with cold water. There was dirt everywhere and we were never allowed to wash, our inflamed eyes gave us terrible pain, we fainted continuously.

Every twenty minutes or so our cell doors were opened and the soldiers insulted and hit us. Whenever the doors were opened we had to stand still with our backs to the door. Two plates of food, spiced with salt, pepper, and mustard to make us thirstier, were given us daily. We ate in the dark on the floor. The thirst was the most terrible of all our tortures and we could not sleep.

In this condition I was brought to trial.

During the Nazi war crimes trials and hearings, almost any method that would obtain a "confession" was employed.

Eager to implicate high-ranking German officers in the Malmedy Massacre, American investigator Harry Thon ordered Wehrmacht sergeant Willi Schafer to write out an incriminating affidavit:

Next morning Mr. Thon appeared in my cell, read my report, tore it up, swore at me and hit me. After threatening to have me killed unless I wrote what he wanted, he left. A few minutes later the door of my cell opened, a black hood encrusted with blood, was put over my head and face and I was led to another room. In view of Mr. Thon's threat the black cap had a crushing effect on my spirits.... Four men of my company ... accused me, although later they admitted to having borne false testimony. Nevertheless I still refused to incriminate myself. Thereupon Mr. Thon said that if I continued to refuse this would be taken as proof of my Nazi opinions, and...my death was certain. He said I would have no chance against four witnesses, and advised me for my own good to make a statement after which I would be set free…. I still refused. I told Mr. Thon that although my memory was good, I was unable to recall any of the occurrences he wished me to write about and which to the best of my knowledge had never occurred.

Mr. Thon left but returned in a little while with Lieutenant [William] Perl who abused me, and told Mr. Thon that, should I not write what was required within half an hour, I should be left to my fate. Lieutenant Perl made it clear to me that I had the alternative of writing and going free or not writing and dying. I decided for life.

Another Landser unable to resist the pressure was Joachim Hoffman:

[W]hen taken for a hearing a black hood was placed over my head. The guards who took me to my hearing often struck or kicked me. I was twice thrown down the stairs and was hurt so much that blood ran out of my mouth and nose. At the hearing, when I told the officers about the ill treatment I had suffered, they only laughed. I was beaten and the black cap pulled over my face whenever I could not answer the questions put to me, or gave answers not pleasing to the officers.... I was beaten and several times kicked in the genitals.

Understandably, after several such sessions, even the strongest submitted and signed papers incriminating themselves and others.

"If you confess you will go free," nineteen-year-old Siegfried Jaenckel was told. "[Y]ou need only to say you had an order from your superiors. But if you won't speak you will be hung."

Despite the mental and physical abuse, young Jaenckel held out as long as he could: "I was beaten and I heard the cries of the men being tortured in adjoining cells, and whenever I was taken for a hearing I trembled with fear.... Subjected to such duress I eventually gave in, and signed the long statement dictated to me."

Far from being isolated or extreme cases, such methods of extorting confessions were the rule rather than the exception. Wrote author Freda Utley, who learned of the horror after speaking with American jurist Edward van Roden:

Beatings and brutal kickings; knocking-out of teeth and breaking of jaws; mock trials; solitary confinement; torture with burning splinters; the use of investigators pretending to be priests; starvation; and promises of acquittal.... Judge van Roden said: 'All but two of the Germans in the 139 cases we investigated had been kicked in the testicles beyond repair. This was standard operating procedure with our American investigators.' He told of one German who had had lighted matchsticks forced under his fingernails by the American investigators to extort a confession, and had appeared at his trial with his fingers still bandaged from the atrocity.

In addition to testimony given under torture, those who might have spoken in defense of the accused were prevented. Moreover, hired "witnesses" were paid by the Americans to parrot the prosecution's charges.

When criticism such as Utley's and van Roden's surfaced, and even as victims were being hung by the hundreds, those responsible defended their methods.

"We couldn't have made those birds talk otherwise.…," laughed one Jewish "interrogator," Colonel A. H. Rosenfeld. "It was a trick, and it worked like a charm."

PART FOUR

A

S a child, I vividly recall a scene from an old war movie. The US Marines are storming some Pacific island and driving the terrified "Jap" defenders

before them, much as beaters drive prey. The wild chase increases in momentum until the enemy is finally flushed from the trees and onto the beach. Halting their tanks, situating their machine guns for maximum effect, the marines open fire. Scores of Japanese are mowed down mercilessly. With no hope, with no escape, the survivors leap into the surf and try to swim for it. In a matter of minutes, there is not a living "Nip" among them.

Another scene I vividly recall seeing—and this only once—was a war documentary. A Japanese sailor is struggling in the water amid a flotsam of oil and debris, desperately trying to save himself. Clearly, he is a survivor from a recently sunk ship. The sailor is so close to the American naval vessel that I can see the fear and confusion in his face.

Suddenly, from a point beyond camera range, bullets spray the water around the man. In a panic, the sailor begins swimming around and around in circles. Finally, a well-aimed bullet blows the young man's head apart and he sinks silently beneath the surface.

In those old documentary films that cover World War Two in the Pacific, there is a very good reason why one seldom sees a live Jap in any of them, much less a prison camp filled with live Japs. Just as they were doing in Europe, Americans in the Pacific were taking no prisoners. The awful truth never mentioned in these films, or in any book, for that matter, is that the war with Japan from start to finish was a black flag no-quarter contest in which the rules of engagement were shockingly simple: If the Japanese won, they lived...if they lost, they died.

DIRTY JAPS

M

ILLIONS raped, millions tortured, millions enslaved, millions murdered—truly the defeat of Nazi Germany was utter in its hate and hellish in

its evil. It was, by all standards, the most savage and sadistic such defeat in human history.

Savage and sadistic as the war and ensuing "peace" in Germany was, nowhere was the terrible price of propaganda more evident than in the war with Japan. Unlike the Germans who not only looked and acted much like the Americans, British, French, and Russians, and shared a similar religion and culture, the Japanese were outwardly, at least, very different from their opponents in World War Two. Most graphic, of course, was race and the fact that the Japanese were Asians.

Although racially and culturally the enemy nations differed, prior to hostilities each side had no difficulty at all interacting amicably with one another. Indeed, a great degree of mutual respect, even admiration, existed among the two peoples.

All that changed in a blink, of course, on December 7, 1941. With the sudden attack on Pearl Harbor the American propaganda mill had no problem at all transforming those who had been universally acknowledged as a kind, courteous, and dignified people into a race of "dirty rats," "yellow monkeys" and "sneaky Japs." Thus, unlike the vilification campaign waged against Germans which took a great amount of time, effort and imagination, the job of demonizing the Japanese was simple. Once the US Government and the entertainment industry was up and rolling, the natural outrage and racial instincts of white Americans took over.

In the anti-Japanese furor that swept America following Pearl Harbor, in the hyper-heated madness to exact revenge for the attack, rare was that American who paused to consider that perhaps the impetus behind Pearl Harbor was the months of deliberate and humiliating aggression directed at Japan by the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration, including the embargo of vital raw materials without which Japan was doomed to collapse as an industrialized nation. Well before December 7, 1941, such sanctions were correctly viewed by the proud Japanese leadership, as well as the world, as a de facto declaration of war by the United States. Also, though few were aware at the time, it has long since been known that Roosevelt and others in the US government were well aware of the coming attack in the central Pacific.

Nevertheless, because of Japan's military pact with Nazi Germany, Roosevelt and his Jewish "advisers" desperately hoped that backing the Japanese into a corner would provoke just such a response resulting in the United States entering the European war via the "back door." In that case, the U.S. would then join with Britain and the Soviet Union to crush Hitler and Germany.

Thus, and almost on cue, the "sneak" attack at Pearl Harbor and the "date which will live in infamy" was used by the propagandists as a rallying cry to whip the American people into a frenzy of anger, hatred and revenge.

If possible, the degree of American rage actually increased four months later when lurid details of the "Bataan Death March" reached the public. Bad enough in its own right, the chaotic 60-mile forced march of over 70,000 American and Filipino troops captured after the siege of Bataan was made infinitely worse by the fact that many of the prisoners were already near death for lack of food and medicine resulting from the long siege itself. Overwhelmed by the sheer number of prisoners, unable to provide transportation, the Japanese could do little else but watch as hundreds of prisoners dropped dead along the road during the long march.

Dehumanizing the enemy

Describing them as "yellow vermin," angry American artists created posters depicting the Japanese as everything and anything, save human—sneaking cockroaches, rampaging monkeys, large-fanged snakes, flapping vampire bats—an official U.S. Navy film described enemy soldiers as "living, snarling rats."

Reinforcing this dehumanization process were US political and military leaders. While General Eisenhower was busily murdering as many as a million disarmed German prisoners in his secret death camps, Admiral William Halsey, US commander of operations in the South Pacific, seemed determined that not a single Japanese in his sphere of operations would even live long enough to reach a death camp.

"Kill Japs! Kill Japs! Kill more Japs!" Halsey exhorted his men time and time again. "Remember Pearl Harbor— *keep 'em dying!*"

Thus, in what was perhaps the worst-kept secret throughout all branches of the US military, it was this unofficial, yet understood, injunction to all American service men, high and low, that there was to be absolutely no mercy shown the enemy in combat.

"You will take no prisoners, you will kill every yellow son-of-a-bitch, and that's it," yelled a marine colonel to his men as their landing craft was about to touch shore on one Japanese-held island.

And thus it was, from the outset, from the initial island invasions of 1942, all the way down to 1945 and the nuclear holocausts at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, "no quarter" to Japan and the Japanese was the tacit understanding.

***

Despite the generally held belief that persists to this day, a belief which argues that all Japanese soldiers willingly, even eagerly, died for the emperor, relatively few young men embraced such an end if there was any hope of living. Like the American, British and Australian soldiers they were facing, most Japanese soldiers dreamed only of a day when the war was over; when they could return home in peace to family and friends; to marry a sweetheart; to raise a family; to tend a small garden; to enjoy *life*. Nevertheless, almost from the first, it soon became apparent to these young men that there would be, that there could be, no surrender. Wrote one American early in the war:

Japanese were known to come out of the jungle unarmed with their hands raised above their heads, crying, 'Mercy, mercy,' only to be mowed down by machine-gun fire.

One of the few: A live captive

Time and again, on every contested island and every spit of sand, Japanese soldiers and sailors were slaughtered the instant they raised their hands and walked forward to surrender. After scores of such encounters in which breathless comrades in hiding watched, waited, then witnessed the massacre of their unarmed friends, fewer and fewer Japanese soldiers entertained even the slightest notion of giving up.

Ironically, though murdering a helpless enemy may have brought some sadistic satisfaction to Allied soldiers, the failure to take prisoners insured that thousands of comrades would also be killed by an enemy now forced to dig in and fight to the death. It is also a fact that as the war wore on and defeat became certain, more and more Japanese soldiers would have gladly surrendered if only they could.

"If men had been allowed to surrender honorably," admitted one Japanese veteran late in the war, "everybody would have been doing it."

In addition to the murder of prisoners, numerous other atrocities occurred. When one marine battalion captured a Japanese field hospital containing over 400 unarmed men, including patients and medics, all were slaughtered on the spot. Other massacres occurred when hundreds, even thousands, of Japanese were driven onto beaches or small peninsulas where there was no hope of escape. Such wholesale "kill offs" reminded one Midwestern marine of nothing so much as the merciless massacre of jack rabbits driven into fenced enclosures back home.

"Nothing can describe the hate we feel for the Nips," wrote an American lieutenant to his mother. "The destruction, the torture, burning & death of countless civilians, the savage fight without purpose—to us they are dogs and rats—we love to kill them—to me and all of us killing Nips is the greatest sport known—it causes no sensation of killing a human being but we really get a kick out of hearing the bastards scream."

Remembered another witness:

When a Japanese soldier was 'flushed' from his hiding place . . . the unit . . . was resting and joking. But they seized their rifles and began using him as a live target while he dashed frantically around the clearing in search of safety. The soldiers found his movements uproariously funny. Finally . . . they succeeded in killing him. . . . None of the American soldiers apparently ever considered that he may have had human feelings of fear and the wish to be spared.

Flame throwers were a particularly sadistic way to "roast rats." Reported one observer:

"Cured" Japanese skull

I have asked fighting men, for instance, why they—or actually, why we—regulated flame-throwers in such a way that enemy soldiers were set afire, to die slowly and painfully, rather than killed outright with a full blast of burning oil. Was it

because they hated the enemy so thoroughly? The answer was invariably, ‘No, we don’t hate those poor bastards particularly; we just hate the whole goddam mess and have to take it out on somebody.’

"We are drowning and burning them all over the Pacific, and it is just as much pleasure to burn them as to drown them," bragged William Halsey. As the admiral was well aware, his men were doing much more than just burning and drowning the enemy....

With discipline lax or non-existent, those who wanted to torture, kill and mutilate, did. Desecration of bodies first began with the first islands invaded. Along a wide stream dividing the two armies on Guadalcanal, fresh arriving troops noticed decapitated Japanese heads stuck on poles facing across the river. There on the "Canal" and elsewhere, U.S. Marines tossed the dead and dying into open latrines while others laughingly urinated into the open mouths of the wounded.

The collection of ears, noses, fingers, and other body parts was a pastime many marines proudly participated in. Some strung the trophies and wore them like necklaces.

"Our boys cut them off to show their friends in fun, or to dry and take back to the States when they go," said one man matter-of-factly.

Japanese skulls were another popular trophy. Some were sent home to friends, family, even sweethearts. Most heads, however, after being “cured” by ravenous ants or boiled in kettles to remove flesh, were then sold to eager naval personnel.

Bones were also collected. Some were carved to form letter openers for folks back home. Even the White House received one such present.

"This is the sort of gift I like to get," laughed President Roosevelt. "There'll be plenty more such gifts."
Understandably, when news reached Japan that the bodies of their sons and husbands were being wantonly abused and that the US president himself countenanced such atrocities, there was outrage. The Americans were portrayed in the Japanese press as "deranged, primitive, racist, and inhuman." Explained one American, himself equally outraged:

The thought of a Japanese soldier's skull becoming an American ashtray was as horrifying in Tokyo as the thought of an American prisoner used for bayonet practice was in New York.

Of all the trophies, however, none were more sought out than gold-capped teeth. After any battle or massacre, the mouths of the fallen were often the first stop for many Americans. Like South Sea prospectors, fights broke out when "claim-jumpers" attempted to steal the bodies claimed by others. One excited marine felt he had struck it rich after spotting a dead enemy. "But," according to a witness...

...the Japanese wasn't dead. He had been wounded severely in the back and couldn't move his arms; otherwise he would have resisted to his last breath. The Japanese's mouth glowed with huge gold-crowned teeth, and his captor wanted them. He put the point of his KaBar (knife) on the base of a tooth and hit the handle with the palm of his hand. Because the Japanese was kicking his feet and thrashing about, the knife point glanced off the tooth and sank deeply into the victim's mouth. The Marine cursed him and with a slash cut his cheeks open to each ear. He put his foot on the sufferer's lower jaw and tried again. Blood poured out of the soldier's mouth. He made a gurgling noise and thrashed wildly. I shouted, 'Put the man out of his misery.' All I got for an answer was a cussing out. Another Marine ran up, put a bullet in the enemy soldier's brain, and ended his agony. The scavenger grumbled and continued extracting his prizes undisturbed.

Understandably, Japanese soldiers had no more desire to surrender and be tortured than did US soldiers fighting the Indians on the Plains of America a century earlier. Each fought to the finish, but each also saved the "last bullet" for themselves. If a Japanese soldier found himself surrounded with no way to escape or kill himself, he committed "suicide" by walking calmly back and forth along the enemy lines until a bullet found its mark. Sometimes ten, even twenty, Japanese would thus kill themselves simultaneously.

Once the Americans reached Saipan, Okinawa and other Japanese islands with civilian populations, mass rape was added to the menu of war crimes. Small wonder that a Japanese soldier, or civilian, for that matter, would do whatever it took to keep from falling into Allied hands. As one American revealed:

The northern tip of Saipan is a cliff with a sheer drop into the sea. At high tide the sharp coral rocks are almost covered with swirling surf. The Japanese civilians and the surviving soldiers were all crowded into this area. Now one of the worst horrors of the war occurred. In spite of loud-speaker messages asking them to surrender, and assurances that they would be well-treated, they began killing themselves. Soldiers clutched hand grenades to their bellies and pulled the pins. Through our spotting scopes from our observation post I witnessed this sickening spectacle. One of the worst experiences of my life.

Not only were there virtually no survivors among the 30,000 men of the Japanese garrison on Saipan, but two out of every three civilians—some 22,000 in all—either were murdered or committed suicide.

"We just blew it all up," admitted one marine. "We don't know if there were women and children or whatever, we just blew them up."

"Japanese are still being shot all over the place," reported an Australian late in the war. "The necessity for capturing them has ceased to worry anyone. Nippo soldiers are just so much machine-gun practice."

A handful of prisoners did manage to get captured, of course, by accident if nothing else. All were spared solely for the information they might provide. When the interrogation was through, the subjects were of no further use. Wrote one witness:

When they flew Japanese prisoners back for questioning on a C-47, they kept the freight door at the side of the plane open, and when the questioning of each man was concluded, he'd be kicked overboard before they reached their

destination.

Of course, it was not just island-hopping marines who committed countless atrocities; virtually all American service men partook. A Japanese sailor whose ship or submarine was sunk stood no better chance of survival than his comrade on shore. US naval vessels routinely shelled all life boats and machine-gunned any survivors still in the water. Overhead, Japanese pilots who escaped from burning planes were themselves murdered by Allied airmen as they struggled in their parachute harnesses.

As late as October, 1944, it was announced that a mere 604 Japanese were being held in Allied POW camps.

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Just as the Allied air forces were targeting cities and civilians in Germany, so too was

the US air force

Hiroshima: August 6, 1945

incinerating the women and children of Japan. As was the case with his peers in Europe, cigar-chewing, Jap-hating Gen. Curtis Lemay had no qualms whatsoever of targeting non-combatants. Once his air armada moved with striking distance of the Japanese home islands, the American air commander sent his B-29 bombers to attack Japan with high explosives and phosphorous bombs. Virtually all Japanese urban centers suffered utter

destruction but it was the larger cities that were forced to endure the hell of "fire bombing."

In one raid on Tokyo alone, in one night, an estimated 75,000 to 200,000 people, mostly women and children, were burned to death. Only the incineration of Dresden, were burned to death. Only the incineration of Dresden, 400,000, was greater.

In January, 1945, Gen. Douglas MacArthur forwarded to President Roosevelt a Japanese offer to surrender that he had just received. Roosevelt spurned the request. Seven months later, the new American president, Harry Truman, received virtually the same offer from the Japanese. This time, the Americans accepted. Had the Japanese surrender been accepted when first offered, well over one million people, American and Japanese, would not have died needlessly. Had peace been made in January, 1945, there would have been no battle blood-bathes as occurred at Iwo Jima and Okinawa. There would have been no firebombing murder of hundreds of thousands of women and children in Tokyo, Yokohama, Osaka, and every other major Japanese city. And, perhaps most important of all, had the Japanese peace offer been accepted earlier there would have been no horrific use of atomic weapons against the women and children of Japan and no stigma or shame attached to we Americans forever for the use of such hideous and hellish weapons.

The fiery deaths of civilians in Tokyo and other cities and the vaporization of 200,000 mostly women and children in Hiroshima and Nagasaki remains an evil black smear on the human soul for all time to come; they provide a clear and terrible testament to man's inhumanity to man. The unbridled assaults against the helpless civilians of Japan were also a graphic comment on the powerful price of propaganda. From beginning to end, American political and military leaders hoped to punish the Japanese like no other people in history had been punished. Hence, the refusal to accept Japan's surrender in January, 1945, and the refusal to accept the surrender several times later on. The argument made by President Truman and his apologists that the atomic bombs were used to "end the war soon" and thereby save both American and Japanese lives, was a lie; it was a lie then and it is a lie to this very day. In fact, Truman deliberately prolonged the war until the bombs were tested, assembled, delivered, and ready for use against Japan. When the first device exploded as use against Japan. When the first device exploded as 100,000 civilians, Truman was eager to use another such bomb against another civilian target, Nagasaki. Had Truman a hundred nuclear weapons in his arsenal—rather than the mere two that he used—it seems clear he would have dropped them all on the women and children of Japan.

"The only language they seem to understand is the one we have been using to bombard them," argued the American president. "When you have to deal with a beast you have to treat him like a beast. It is most regrettable but nevertheless necessary."

Another argument for the use of the atomic bombs when Japan was willing, even eager, to surrender, was an attempt to impress the Soviet Union with American might. If such a line of reasoning was indeed true, as many later pointed out, then the weapons could have just as easily been used against isolated military targets, and not urban areas filled with women and children.

Certainly, one strong reason for using the weapon, though never mentioned then, and seldom mentioned even now, was hate. The bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were merely a more dramatic and devastating continuation of the no-quarter policy that had been in effect since December 7, 1941. The bombs were used against a muchhated enemy simply because the Americans wanted to use them. Weapons that would kill tens of thousands in a flash, then kill tens of thousands more in the most hideous and painful ways imaginable made perfectly good sense at the time; it certainly made sense to Truman and millions of Americans then, and sadly, it still makes perfectly good sense to millions of Americans even now, seventy years later.

"The Dirty Japs began the war," as the reasoning ran then, and still runs now, "the Dirty Japs fought the war in the most inhumane way possible, and so it is thus fitting that these dirty yellow rats should suffer like no other people ever suffered;" or, as one American historian phrased it more delicately: "[T]he widespread image of the Japanese as sub-human constituted an emotional context which provided another justification for decisions which resulted in the death of hundreds of thousands."

Nevertheless, with the war clearly won, and with pangs of conscience beginning to reassert themselves among some, a few voices felt that the dropping of the terrible new weapon was a display of sadistic savagery, pure and simple.

"The use of the atomic bomb, with its indiscriminate killing of women and children, revolts my soul," former US president, Herbert Hoover, wrote shortly after the news reached him.

Added the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral William Leahy:

> It is my opinion that the use of this barbarous weapon at Hiroshima and Nagasaki was of no material assistance in our war against Japan. The Japanese were almost defeated and ready to surrender.... [I]n being the first to use it, we ... adopted an ethical standard common to the barbarians of the Dark Ages.

And even Dwight David Eisenhower—a man who himself knew more than a little about the mass murder of a helpless enemy—suddenly found a mote of pity when he registered his complaint against the use of the hideous new weapon. "The Japanese were ready to surrender...," the general wrote. "It wasn't necessary to hit them with that awful thing."

Mercifully, for everyone concerned, the Allied powers soon accepted the Japanese surrender seven months after it was originally offered and World War Two, the most savage and evil conflict in history, was over.

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When it comes to propaganda, we suspected our enemies of it, but we never figured we were using propaganda. We felt like our country was too honest to use propaganda on us, and we honestly were not conscious that they were.

So wrote Katharine Phillips, an American Red Cross worker during World War Two. Hardly concealed in Katherine's words written long after the war, is the fear, the dread fear, that perhaps the inhuman evil that her generation was told to hate a thousand times over during four years of war may not have been so evil or so inhuman after all. Just as with every other war known to man, World War Two had also been a war of words, a war of poisonous words; a war of deceit, treachery, hate, and lies in which trusting, unsuspecting people were lashed once again into a frenzy of murderous madness by outrageously vicious and vile propaganda. True, some angry words are perhaps needed in times of war to awaken and impassion the laggards among us to work and slave like ants to win such a contest; but equally true, some of that same propaganda, in the hands of evil men behind desks far removed from danger, contribute to outright murder of the most heartless and cold-blooded kind, encourage rape on a massive, historical scale, add to the agonizing death by fire of uncounted millions of women and children, and engender enough hate, misery and pain to make a planet groan.

For many, like Katherine, it took years before they came to realize that the very people they had been programmed to despise, dehumanize and ultimately exterminate like vermin were but after all, very frail, very frightened, very human, and finally...were very much like themselves.

For many Americans like Ms. Phillips, such an epiphany came long after the war. For a fortunate few, however, even in the midst of the terrible inferno itself, reality sometimes shattered the hate-filled propaganda unexpectedly.

The sudden re-humanization of the Japanese came as a shock to some. While sifting through a blackened, blownout cave on Iwo Jima, one marine was "horrified" when he discovered some childish and brightly-colored paintings strewn among the wreckage. After poring over the art work, the soldier was stunned.

"The Japanese soldiers had *children*...who loved them and sent their art work to them," the incredulous marine suddenly realized, just as American children would send pretty pictures to their equally proud fathers.

Rummaging through pockets of the fallen enemy, other Americans were startled when they found newspaper clippings of baseball teams back home in Japan, just as any normal American soldier would carry; or they discovered inside enemy helmets photos of beautiful Japanese movie stars just as many US marines folded pin-ups of Betty Grable or Rita Hayworth in theirs; or they unwrapped delicate letters from home with pictures of girlfriends inside, or they stumbled upon a torn photo amid the debris of battle of a now-dead soldier laughing and rolling on the ground with puppies in his back yard back home. For some Americans, the abrupt realization that there were more similarities between them and their enemy than not was life-altering.

Occasionally, in even more startling ways, the realization of shared humanity came when a dead soldier's diary was discovered:

September 30, 1942 (still on Guadalcanal) We took a short rest in the grove, when we found a figure of a man in a bush. Had he escaped from a crashing plane or infiltrated from the sea? Two or three soldiers chased and caught him after five min or so. He was a young American soldier.

He got a bayonet cut on his forehead and was bleeding. He sat down on the ground leaning on coconut trunks and had his hands tied behind his back. He looked thin, unshaven and wore a waterproofing overcoat.

He pleaded with me to help him, 'General, Help me! 'General, Help me!' He thought I was senior and an officer of higher rank. In the rain, I stood hesitant about what to do with this American soldier. It was impossible for me to set him free. We couldn't take him with my party... We had not roughed him up after capturing him, but the moment I had deported him, the men of the HQ treated him violently. I thought later I should have released him.

I regretted what I had done to him. He didn't make me feel any hatred as an enemy. It was a strange feeling for me. He looked quite young and mild-mannered, and didn't look strong or ferocious at all. He was gentle but fully composed and never disgraced himself. I can't say what befell this young soldier. I am sure he was not a soldier who would easily leak out a military secret. And I am afraid he never returned to his camp.

With the dawn of peace, men and women of good will finally find the strength and courage to revisit the awful crucible they had recently passed through. Some, in shame, cast off the old prejudice and hate that they once had so eagerly embraced, and seek a reckoning, a new and honest understanding of the past that they had played a part in.

Such was the case of Edgar Jones. A veteran himself, first in Europe, then in the Pacific, Jones struggled mightily to make sense of the many senseless things he had seen, heard and perhaps even done. When he was through, when he truly understood what had occurred, the veteran exploded in anger...and honesty.

We Americans have the dangerous tendency in our international thinking to take a holier-than-thou attitude toward other nations. We consider ourselves to be more noble and decent than other peoples, and consequently in a better position to decide what is right and wrong in the world. What kind of war do civilians suppose we fought, anyway? We shot prisoners in cold blood, wiped out hospitals, strafed lifeboats, killed or mistreated enemy civilians, finished off the enemy wounded, tossed the Thomas Goodrich

dying into a hole with the dead, and in the Pacific boiled the flesh off enemy skulls to make table ornaments for sweethearts, or carved their bones into letter openers.... [W]e mutilated the bodies of enemy dead, cutting off their ears

and kicking out their gold teeth for souvenirs, and buried them with their testicles in their mouths.... We topped off our saturation bombing and burning of enemy civilians by dropping atomic bombs on two nearly defenseless cities, thereby setting an all-time record for instantaneous mass slaughter.

As victors we are privileged to try our defeated opponents for their crimes against humanity; but we should be realistic enough to appreciate that if we were on trial for breaking international laws, we should be found guilty on a dozen counts. We fought a dishonorable war, because morality had a low priority in battle. The tougher the fighting, the less room for decency, and in Pacific contests we saw mankind reach the blackest depths of bestiality.

Fortunately, the passionate, heartfelt words of Edgar Jones now speak for millions more around the globe. Alas, if only such words as his could be emblazoned across the sky in fiery letters before each and every rush to war and before each and every "holy crusade" to slaughter an "inhuman" enemy, then certainly the world would be a happier and better place because of it.

More books by Thomas Goodrich….

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Tom Goodrich is a professional writer now living on the Gulf Coast of Florida. For questions or comments, please contact the author at: MTGoodrich@aol.com

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